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ORIENTAL SERIES

AFGHANISTAN

BY
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F.R.G.S.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

AFGHANISTAN may be called one of the cock-pits of the East, for it has seen more bloody battles since it came into the limelight of modern history than any other country of its size. Its early history is wrapped in mystery — its very name has been given to it by the outside world. The inhabitants are of various races, but the most of them call themselves Afghans. They are bold, hardy, warlike, and fond of freedom, restless, and turbulent, and much given to plunder. Both Russia and England have long had designs upon it, for it forms one of the gateways to the Indian possessions of the latter, and most of the bloodshed has been the result of both desiring to gain a foothold there.

Afghanistan has been called the “buffer-state” between England’s Indian Empire and Russia, and this volume brings the account of the movements of Russia towards it down to the present time.

But the volume does more than this: it describes the natural features of this wild and wonderful country with its arid plains and mountain passes commanded by forbidding fortresses, gives an account of its industries and products, furnishes pictures of its palaces, its court life, and its bazaars; describes its administration and its laws, and introduces the reader to the intimate details of a land which has hitherto been practically unknown.

EDITORIAL NOTE

To the student of world politics, this volume will have a special interest: Afghanistan is part of an arena in which some stirring game is always being played, and at any moment it may become the scene of events, which may change the current of the world's history. The student of social conditions and of social problems also will find much in it that is both interesting and valuable. The processes by which the scattered races may become a consolidated nation, or by which they may become still more disintegrated, offer a field of speculative and practical study which is unique. The author, Mr. Angus Hamilton, has spent many years in Oriental travel and in studying conditions in Asiatic countries. He is thoroughly familiar with the scanty, and out-of-the-way, literature dealing with this inaccessible land, and the reader benefits both by the first-hand information gained by travel and personal observations, and by the second-hand knowledge gained from other authors who have visited and described the country.

CHARLES WELSH.

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CHAPTER I

THE ORENBURG-TASHKENT RAILWAY

BY a coincidence of singular interest in Central Asian affairs the completion of the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway occurred simultaneously with the evacuation of Lhassa by the troops of the Tibetan Mission, the two events measuring in a manner the character of the policies pursued by the respective Governments of Great Britain and Russia in Mid-Asia. Moreover, if consideration be given to them and the relation of each to contemporary affairs appreciated, it becomes no longer possible to question the causes which have determined the superior position now held in Asia by Russia. If this situation were the result of some sudden cataclysm of nature by which Russia had been violently projected from her territories in Europe across the lone wastes of the Kirghiz steppe into and beyond the region of the Pamirs or over the desert sands of the Kara Kum to the southern valleys of the Murghab River, the mastery of Central Asia by Russia would be more comprehensible. But the forward advance of Russia to the borders of Persia, along the frontiers of Afghanistan to the north-eastern slopes of the Hindu Kush, has been gradual;

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and in order to secure sufficient momentum for her descent railways were needed; and, while the line so lately completed between Orenburg and Tashkent is a more material factor in the situation than hitherto has been recognised, the laying of the permanent way between Samarkand and Termez, Askhabad and Meshed, approximately gauges the duration of the interval separating Russia from the day when she will have rounded off her position in Mid-Asia. No question of sentiment, no considerations of trade influenced the creation of railway communication between Orenburg and Tashkent, the construction of the Murghab Valley line or the extension of the Trans-Caspian system from Samarkand to Osh. Strategy, steely and calculating, required Mid-Russia to be linked with Mid-Asia, the irresistible expansion of empire following not so much the line of least resistance as the direction from which it would be placed in position for the next move. Continents have been crossed, kingdoms annihilated, and provinces absorbed by Russia in her steady progression towards the heart of Central Asia.

Years have passed since the delimitation of the Russo-Afghan frontier and the definition of the Anglo-Russian spheres of influence in the Pamirs were made. In the interval, beginning with the acceptance of the findings of the Pamir Boundary Commission of 1896, Russia ostensibly has been engaged in evolving an especial position for herself in North China and providing railway communication between Port Arthur, Vladivostock, and St.

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Petersburg. In this direction, too, war has intervened, coming as the culminating stroke to the policy of bold aggression and niggardly compromise which distinguished the diplomatic activities of Russia in Manchuria. Yet throughout these ten years the energies of Russia in Mid-Asia have not been dormant. Inaction ill becomes the Colossus of the North and schemes, which were *en l'air* in 1896, have been pushed to completion, others of equal enterprise taking their place. Roads now thread the high valleys of the Pamirs; forts crown the ranges and the military occupation of the region is established. Similarly, means of access between the interior of the Bokharan dominions and the Oxus have been formed; caravan routes have been converted into trunk roads and the services of the camel, as a mode of transport, have been supplemented by the waggons of the railway and military authorities.

The great importance attaching to the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway and its especial significance at this moment will be appreciated more thoroughly when it is understood that hitherto the work of maintaining touch between European Russia and the military establishment of Russian Turkestan devolved upon a flotilla of fourteen steamers in the Caspian Sea — an uncertain, treacherous water at best — and the long, circuitous railway route *viâ* Moscow and the Caucasus. This necessitated a break of twenty hours for the sea-passage between Baku and Krasnovodsk before connection with the Trans-Caspian Railway could be secured. The military forces in

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Askhabad, Merv, Osh, and Tashkent — including, one might add, the whole region lying between the south-eastern slopes of the Pamirs, Chinese Turkestan, the Russo-Afghan, and the Russo-Persian frontiers — embracing the several Turkestan Army Corps, were dependent upon a single and interrupted line. Now, however, under the provision of this supplementary and more direct Orenburg-Tashkent route the entire military situation in Central Asia has been dislocated in favour of whatever future disposition Russia may see fit to adopt. All the great depôts of Southern and Central Russia — Odessa, Simpheropol, Kieff, Kharkoff, and Moscow, in addition to the Caucasian bases as a possible reserve of reinforcements — are placed henceforth in immediate contact with Merv and Tashkent, this latter place at once becoming the principal military centre in these regions. Similarly, equal improvement will be manifested in the position along the Persian and Afghan borders, to which easy approach is now obtained over the metals of this new work and for which those military stations — Askhabad, Merv, Samarkand — standing upon the Trans-Caspian Railway, and Osh now serve as a line of advanced bases. It is, therefore, essential to consider in detail this fresh state of affairs; and as knowledge of the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway is necessary to the proper understanding of the position of Afghanistan, the following study of that kingdom is prefaced with a complete description of the Orenburg-Tashkent work, together with the remaining sections of rail-

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way communication between Orenburg and Kushinski Post.

The journey between St. Petersburg and Orenburg covers 1230 miles and between Orenburg and Tashkent 1174 miles, the latter line having taken almost four years to lay. Work began on the northern section in the autumn of 1900 and many miles of permanent way had been constructed before, in the autumn of 1901, a start was made from the south. The two sections were united in September of 1904; but the northern was not opened to general traffic until July, nor the southern before November, 1905. Prior to the railway, communications were maintained by means of tarantass along the post-road, which led from Aktiubinsk across the Kirghiz steppes *viâ* Orsk to Irghiz and thence through Kazalinsk to Perovski, where the road passed through Turkestan to run *viâ* Chimkent to Tashkent — a journey of nineteen days. In addition to the galloping *patyorka* and *troika* — teams of five and three horses respectively — which were wont to draw the vehicles along the post-road and the more lumbering Bactrian camels, harnessed three abreast and used in the stages across the Kara Kum, long, picturesque processions of camels, bound for Orenburg and carrying cotton and wool from Osh and Andijan, silks from Samarkand and Khiva, tapestries from Khokand, lamb's-wool, skins and carpets from Bokhara, and dried fruits from Tashkent, annually passed between Tashkent and Orenburg from June to November.

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Of late years, the Trans-Caspian Railway, begun by Skobeleff in 1880 and gradually carried forward by Annenkoff to Samarkand, has supplanted the once flourishing traffic of the post-road, along which the passing of the mails is now the sole movement. The new railway, too, is destined to eliminate even these few links with the past, although in the end it may revive the prosperity of the towns which through lack of the former trade have shrunk in size and diminished in importance. The line does not exactly follow the postal route; but from Orenburg, which is the terminus of the railway from Samara on the Trans-Siberian system, it crosses the Ural River to Iletsk on the Ilek, a tributary of the Ural. From Iletsk the metals run *viâ* Aktiubinsk and Kazalinsk along the Syr Daria Valley *viâ* Perovski to Turkestan and thence to the terminus at Tashkent.

Originally one of three suggested routes, the Orenburg-Tashkent road was the more desirable because the more direct. Alternative schemes in favour of connecting the Trans-Siberian with the Central Asian Railway on one hand and the Saratoff-Uralsk Railway with the Central Asian Railway on the other were submitted to the commission appointed to select the route. Prudence and sentiment, as well as the absence of any physical difficulties in the way of prompt construction, tempered the resolution of the tribunal in favour of the old post-track. It was begun at once and pushed to completion within four years — a feat impossible to accomplish in the case of either of the two rival schemes. The former

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of these, costly, elaborate, and ambitious, sought to connect Tashkent with Semipalatinsk, the head of the steamboat service on the Irtish River, 2000 miles away, *viâ* Aulie-ata, Verni, and Kopal. Passing between the two lakes Issyk and Balkash alternative routes were suggested for its direction from Semipalatinsk: the one securing a connection with the Trans-Siberian system at Omsk, the other seeking to pass along the post-road to Barnaul, terminating at Obi where the Trans-Siberian Railway bridges the Obi River. The supporters of the scheme, which aimed at uniting the Saratoff-Uralsk Railway with the Central Asian Railway, proposed to carry the line beyond Uralsk to Kungrad, a fishing village in close proximity to the efflux of the Amu Daria and the Aral Sea. From Kungrad, passing east of Khiva, the line would have traversed the Black Sands following a straight line and breaking into the Central Asian system at Charjui, opposite which, at Farab, a line to Termes *viâ* Kelif has been projected; and where, too, an iron girder bridge, resting on nineteen granite piers, spans the Amu Daria. It is useless at this date to weigh the balance between the several schemes; one of which, the Orenburg-Tashkent route, has become an accomplished fact to provide, doubtless in the near future, matter for immediate concern.

From Orenburg, of which the population is 80,000, the line 4 versts ¹ from the station crosses the Ural River by an iron bridge, 160 sagues ² in length, run-

¹ 1 Verst = $\frac{3}{4}$ mile English.

² 1 Sagene = 7 feet English.

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ning from there south to Iletsk, formerly the fortress Iletskaya Zashchita and at present a sub-district town of the Orenburg Government with a population of 12,000.

From Iletsk a short branch line, rather more than three versts in length, proceeds to the Iletsk salt mines. Running eastwards and crossing the Ilek River from the right to the left bank by an iron bridge 105 sages in length it reaches Aktiubinsk, a district town in Turhai Province. At this stage the railway traverses the main watershed of the Ural, Temir, Kubele, and Embi Rivers, arriving at the Kum Asu Pass across the Mugodjarski Range. The passage of the line through the mountains, extending 26 versts and a veritable triumph of engineering, imposed a severe test upon the constructive ability of the railway staff. Beyond the range the line turns southward following the valleys of the Bolshoi, Mali Karagandi, and Kuljur Rivers until, 600 versts from Orenburg, it arrives at Lake Tchelkar. The line now runs across the Bolshiye and Maliye Barsuki sands, where there is abundance of underground fresh water, to the northern extremity of the Sari Tchegonak Inlet on the Aral Sea, where it descends to sea-level moving along the north-eastern shore. The military depot at Kazalinsk — sometimes called Fort No. 1 — now approaches. This point founded in 1854 has lost its exclusive military character, ranking merely among the district centres of the Syr Daria Province. Thirty-six versts from Kazalinsk, at the next station, Mai Libash, situated in a locality

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quite suitable for colonisation, a branch line, 4 versts in length, links up the important water-way of the Syr Daria with the Orenburg-Tashkent system, extending the facilities of the railway to shipping which may be delayed through stress of bad weather in the gulf or through inadequacy of the draught over the bar at the mouth of the river.

The main line keeps to the Syr Daria, running through the steppe along the post-road to Karmakchi or Fort No. 2. On leaving Karmakchi it diverges from the post-road to wind round a succession of lakes and marshes which lie at a distance of 50 versts from the river. The railway continuing its original direction now runs along the basins of the Syr Daria and the Karauzyak, a tributary which it crosses twice by small bridges, each constructed with two spans 60 sagues in length. The character of the country from Karmakchi to Perovski, a distance of 138 versts, differs considerably from the region preceding it. The low-lying ground, broken by swamps, is everywhere covered with a thick overgrowth of reeds; while the more elevated parts, watered by ariks, are devoted to the cultivation of crops. The town of Perovski is situated in flat country $1\frac{1}{2}$ versts from the station. From there to Djulek the line returns to the post-road and some distance from the Syr Daria passes between the river and the Ber Kazan Lakes to Ber Kazan. At Djulek, the name being adopted from a small adjacent hamlet, it diverges from the post-road to run direct to the village of Skobelevski, one of those curious peasant settlements

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which located in the uttermost parts of Central Asia preserve in their smallest detail every characteristic of remote Russia. At such a place life savours so strongly of the Middle Ages that one scarcely heeds the purely modern significance which attaches to the Iron Horse.

Barely 30 versts from Skobelevski and situated close to the Syr Daria, there is the station of Tumen Arik, which gives place to Turkestan, beyond which for 120 versts the line runs parallel with the post-road. The station is $2\frac{1}{2}$ versts to the north of the town of Turkestan, one of the most important towns in the Syr Daria Province and only 40 versts from the Syr Daria. The next station, Ikan, is associated with the conquest of Turkestan, a famous battle having been fought about the scene where the station buildings now stand. Twenty versts to the north of the station, close to the post-road, there is a memorial to Ural Cossacks who fell during the fight. Otrar, the following station, is identified with the tradition, derived from the existence of an enormous mound standing amid the ruins of the old-time city of Otrar, that Timur, when his army crossed the Syr Daria, ordered each of his soldiers to throw a handful of earth upon the ground at the point where the river was crossed in safety. Beyond Otrar the line runs along the right bank of the Aris River, crossing it at 1570 versts from Orenburg by a bridge of 90 sagues in three spans of 30 sagues each. Aris station is placed further along the river bank at a point where at some future date branch lines between it

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and the town of Verni, as well as to a junction with the Trans-Siberian system, will be laid. After leaving it, the railway, still ascending, ultimately crosses the pass of Sari Agatch in the Kizi Kurt Range, 267 sagues above the sea.

The descent from the pass leads to Djilgi Valley where the line crosses three bridges; passing over the Keless River by a single-span bridge of 25 sagues, over the Bos-su arik by a bridge of 18 sagues, and over the Salar River by a bridge of 12 sagues. Seventy-two versts further, the line runs into its terminus at Tashkent which is now classed as a station of the first degree, although commercially it stands only sixth among the stations of the Central Asian Railway ranking with Andijan and yielding priority of place to Krasnovodsk, Samarkand, Khokand, Askhabad, and Bokhara. It is proposed at Tashkent, which lies 1762 versts from Orenburg, 1747 versts from Krasnovodsk, and 905 versts from Merv, and where it is evident that the needs of the railway have been carefully studied, to double the track between Orenburg and Tashkent. Large stocks of spare rails and railway plant are held in reserve in sheds, one important feature of this very efficient preparation being the possession of 20 versts of light military railway. The erection of engine-sheds, waggon-sheds, workshops, supply stores, and quarters for the staff has followed a most elaborate scale, these buildings being arranged in three groups around the station. The railway medical staff and the subordinate traffic and traction officials occupy the first; the chiefs of

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the traffic, telegraph, and traction departments are in possession of the second; the remaining employees securing accommodation in the third set of buildings placed at the end of the Station Square. Along the opposite face are the spacious workshops where between five and six hundred men find daily employment; in juxtaposition with the general depot are the railway hospital, where there is accommodation for 10 beds, the main supply stores and a naphtha reservoir with a capacity of 50,000 poods.¹

The country in the neighbourhood of Tashkent as seen from the railway presents the picture of a bountiful oasis. For 20 versts there is no interruption to a scene of wonderful fertility. Market gardens, smiling vineyards, and fruitful orchards, not to mention cotton-fields and corn lands, cover the landscape. This abundance in a measure is due to careful irrigation and to the excellent system of conserving water which has been introduced. In support of this, 113 specific works have been completed, each of which — and the giant total includes water-pipes by the mile and innumerable aqueducts — was a component part of that scheme of irrigation by which life in Central Asia alone can be made possible.

Although work upon the Orenburg-Tashkent line began in 1900 immediately after the completion of the original survey, wherever more careful examination has shown an advantage to be possible alterations have been made. The cost of construction, estimated at 70,000 roubles² per verst, has been

¹ 1 pood = 36 lbs.

² 1 rouble = two shillings.

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materially lessened by these means — a reduction of 24 versts equally divided between the Orenburg and Kazalinsk, Kazalinsk and Tashkent sections having been effected. By comparison with the old post-road the railway is much the shorter of the two lines of communication, the advantage in its favour amounting to 134 versts on one section of the road alone; the actual length between Tashkent and Kazalinsk being by post-road $953\frac{1}{4}$ versts and by railway $819\frac{1}{4}$.

In its local administration the railway is divided into four sections:

No. 1. From Orenburg to the Mugodjarski Mountains about 400 versts.

No. 2. From Mugodjarski Mountains to the sands of Bolshiye Barsuki, 400 to 560 versts.

No. 3. From the sands of Bolshiye Barsuki to Kazalinsk, 560 to 845 versts.

No. 4. From Kazalinsk to Tashkent, 845 to 1762 versts.

In the northern section the line is supplied everywhere with fresh water — in the first instance from the Ural River and then by the smaller rivers, Donguz, Elshanka, Ilek, Kulden, Kubele, Temir, and Embi; Koss Lake, and finally from wells.

Here are the Iletsk mines, famous for their rock salt. They despatch annually to Orenburg more than 1,500,000 poods of salt. The deposits cover a field 4 versts in extent with an unvarying thickness of more than 85 sagenes. The section now in working contains 100 milliard poods of salt. The annual

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yield may be reckoned at 7,000,000 poods. At the present time considerable less than this output is obtained, the high freight charges upon land-carried goods and the insufficiency of the labour available being responsible for the disproportion.

In another direction, the Iletsk district is of importance; the veterinary station Temir Utkul, through which pass large herds of cattle on their way to Orenburg from the Ural Province, having been established there. In the course of the year many thousands of cattle are examined by the surgeons of the Veterinary Board — the existence of the numerous cattle-sheds and the constant arrival of the droves adding to the noise and bustle of Iletsk, if not exactly increasing its gaiety. Further on, in the Aktiubinsk district of the Turgai Province and along the whole valley of the Ilek River, where much of the land is under cultivation, wide belts are given over to the pasturage of these travelling mobs of cattle. Upon both banks of the river, too, there are Kirghiz villages.

From an agricultural point of view this locality, on account of its paucity of population and fertile soil, is regarded with high favour by the immigration authorities. In the town of Aktiubinsk itself there is a yearly market of cattle, corn, manufactures, and agricultural implements. This as a rule returns a quarter of a million roubles. Now that the railway has been completed and opened to passenger and commercial traffic, it is expected that it will give an immediate impetus to this region and that it will

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be possible to carry out a more careful examination of its mining resources, of which at the present time there are only indications. Copper has been traced along the Burt, Burl, Khabd, and Kutchuk Sai Rivers; deposits of coal have been found near the Maloi Khabd, Teress Butak, and Yakshi Kargach Rivers; iron has been located by the Burt River and naphtha on the Djus River; while there is reason to believe that gold exists in the vicinity.

On the second section, the line derives its water from springs in the Djaksi Mountains, the basin of the Kuljur River, the Khoja and Tchelkar Lakes. It abounds with Kirghiz villages but minerals do not play an important part in it. A few seams of coal are believed to exist in the ravine of the Alabass stream; and there are lodestone mines in the Djaman Mountains and in the Kin Asu defile. Cattle-farming is more remunerative to the local settlers than cereal production; as a consequence there is very little cultivation.

On the third section, which extends from the sands of Bolshiye Barsuki to Kazalinsk, covering an area of 285 versts, the water-supply is obtained at first from shallow surface wells; but 45 versts from Kazalinsk the railway enters the Syr Daria Valley, where water is abundant. The southern areas of this belt alone possess any commercial importance, owing to Kirghiz from the northern part of the Irgiz district who, to the number of some 10,000 *kibitkas*, winter there. The northern part is largely the continuation of a sparse steppe. The Kazalinsk district,

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beyond which the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway enters Turkestan, is one of the least important divisions of the Syr Daria Province.

Around Kazalinsk itself, however, there has been but little agricultural activity. In the main, development is confined to the fertile Agerskski Valley and along the Kuban Daria, a tributary of the Syr Daria. The return is meagre and the population has not sufficient corn for its own needs. Large quantities of grain are annually imported into the neighbourhood from the Amu Daria district by boat across the Aral Sea or by camel caravan. Railway traffic in this section nevertheless will not rely upon the carriage of cereal produce — live stock, which until the advent of the railway was sent to Orenburg by boat along the Syr Daria and then by caravan-road to the city, representing the prospective return which the district will bring to the line.

The revenue of Kazalinsk is 21,880 roubles. The town contains the residences of a district governor and an inspector of fisheries, together with district military headquarters, the administrative offices of the treasury and the district court, besides a district hospital and a public library. There are no hotels. In early days in the conquest of Turkestan, when the Kazalinsk road served as the only line of communication with European Russia, the town became a busy mart for Orenburg, Tashkent, Khiva, and Bokhara; even now the Kirghiz in the district possess 770,000 head of cattle. Trade was obliterated by the advent of the Central Asian

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Railway; but it is hoped that now the Orenburg-Tashkent line has been opened to traffic it may revive.

The village of Karmakchi, which is situated on the banks of the Syr Daria, is another point in this district. It boasts only a small population, in all some 300 odd, an Orthodox church, post and telegraph office, two schools, hospital, and military base office. Importance attaches to the post as it is upon the high road along which is conducted the winter *trek* of the Kirghiz.

The value of the annual export trade of the region is:

EXPORTS		
	POODS	ROUBLES
Wool { Sheep }	200,000	} 2,000,000
{ Camel }		
Hides	150,000	
Lard	150,000	} 400,000
Cattle		

The value of the annual import trade amounts to:

IMPORTS	
MERCHANDISE	VALUE
110,000 poods	1,800,000 roubles

With the opening of the line to traffic the transportation of fish by the railway has shown a tendency to increase. It is believed that the development of the fishing industry throughout the Aral basin is only a matter of time. At present the yearly catch of fish there reaches a total of 300,000 poods, of which not less than one-half is sent to Orenburg, the trade realising about 1,000,000 roubles. Hitherto little has

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been attempted. With the assistance of the railway a speedy expansion of the trade is assured — the interests of the fishing population and the general welfare of the river traffic having been advanced through the construction of a harbour upon the gulf of Sari Cheganak, in connection with the railway and only five versts distant. Aral Sea, the station at this point, is 790 versts from Orenburg.

The fourth and last division, from Kazalinsk to Tashkent, runs along the valley of the Syr Daria. It is fully supplied with good water and possesses a larger population than either the second or the third sections. In it the line traverses the following districts of the Syr Daria Province:

DISTRICT	AREA	POPULATION
Perovski	95,965 sq. versts	133,784
Chimkent	100,808 “ “	285,180
Tashkent	40,380 “ “	500,015

The Perovski district, notwithstanding the good qualities of its soil, produces very little corn; its chief population consists of nomadic Kirghiz who together own 990,000 head of cattle, the export cattle trade for the district amounting to 2,000,000 roubles annually. Small tracts of wheat and millet are cultivated here and there with the aid of *tchigirs*, native watering-pumps. The water is brought up from the river by means of a wheel, along the rim of which are fixed earthenware jugs or cylindrical vessels of sheet iron. These vessels raise the water to the height of the bank, whence it is very readily distributed. The best corn lands are situated in the

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Djulek sub-district; but the primitive methods of agriculture existing amongst the nomads, in conjunction with the deficiencies in the irrigation system, explain at once the lack of cereal development in these areas.

Perovski was taken by Count Perovski on July 28, 1853, and in honour of the occasion by Imperial order the fortress was renamed Fort Perovski. Close to the town there is a memorial to the Russian soldiers who fell during that engagement.

The present population comprises:

MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL
3197		1969		5166
Orthodox Russians	.....1050	Jews	.....	130
Dissenters	.....210	Tartars	.....	450
Sarts and Kirghiz	.....		.....	3326

together with district administrative offices similar to those established at Kazalinsk. The water-supply is drawn from the Syr Daria by means of wells. There are no hotels. The town revenue is only 12,350 roubles; although the importation of various goods from Russia into the Perovski district represents an annual sum of 2,900,000 roubles. With the advent of the Central Asian Railway the commercial importance of Perovski, once a point through which caravans destined for Orenburg or Tashkent passed, waned. Now its trade is dependent upon the numerous Tartars and Ural Cossacks who have settled there. The place is unhealthy, and the settlement is affected by the malaria arising from the marshes which surround it. In spring and summer the la-

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goons swarm with myriads of mosquitoes and horse-flies; so great is the plague that the Kirghiz together with their flocks and herds after wintering along the Syr Daria beat a hurried retreat into the steppe, driven off by the tiresome insects. Many months elapse before the nomads return; it is not until the cold weather has set in that they appear in any numbers. Quite close to Perovski there are two immigrant villages — Alexandrovski and Novo Astrakhanski — erected in 1895, where the inhabitants are occupied with cattle-farming and the sale of hay in winter time to the Kirghiz. The district possesses nothing save a pastoral population and a small settlement of 200 souls at Djulek. This place, formerly a fortress founded in 1861 and now half destroyed by the floods of the Syr Daria, contains the administrative offices of the commissioner of the section, with a postal and telegraphic bureau and a native school. To the south of Djulek there is Skobelevski, another small village founded by immigrants in 1895 and containing some 56 houses. It is watered by the Tchilli arik. Skobelevski is rapidly developing into a trade-mart, the source of its good fortune being contained in the advantageous position which it fills in the steppe. Throughout this region, plots of land with a good quality soil and well watered have been granted to colonists.

The Chimkent district similarly possesses a rich and fertile soil, derived in the main from its network of irrigating canals. Its population is more numerous than other adjacent settlements and it supports

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altogether 17 immigrant villages with a population of 5135. Chimkent contains in itself all the features necessary to the development of a wide belt of agriculture; but at the present time the most extensive tracts of wheat land are along the systems of the Aris, Aksu, Badam, Buraldai, Burdjar, Tcha-yan, and Bugun Rivers. In the valley of the Arisi, along the middle reaches, there are rice-fields; and in the country round Chimkent the cotton industry has begun to develop. Experiments are being tried in the cultivation of beet-root, as the soil and climatic conditions of the district are especially favourable to its growth. The present quality of the Chimkent beet-root is not inferior to that grown in the Kharkoff Government; so that Chimkent may well become, in the near future, the centre of a sugar-producing industry, not only for Turkestan but for the whole of Central Asia, which so far has imported its sugar exclusively from European Russia.

The district town of Chimkent, formerly a Khokand fortress taken by the Russian forces under the command of General Chernaieff, September 22, 1864, lies upon the eastern side of the railway. Its population comprises:

MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
6887	5554	12,441
Orthodox Russians	768	Jews .....150
Natives	11,523	

Government offices similar to those in other towns are also found.

The town revenue is 11,760 roubles.

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The trade returns of the Chimkent district amount to 5,000,000 roubles.

Through Chimkent passes a road from Tashkent to Verni. In the northern part of the district the line runs close to the ruins of the ancient town of Sauran and the fortress of Vani Kurgan, from where it proceeds to Turkestan. This was occupied in 1864 by the Russian forces under the command of General Verevkin.

Turkestan is situated 40 versts to the east of the right bank of the Syr Daria, at a height of 102 sagenes above sea-level. It is watered by canals diverted from springs and small rivers which flow from the southern slopes of the Kara Mountains. The combined population of the place comprises:

MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL
7624		6461		14,085
Orthodox Russians	..... 441	Jews	.....	460
Dissenters	..... 31	Natives	.....	13,153

The outward appearance of the town is extremely handsome. There is much vegetation, many wide streets, and large open spaces.

There are:

RUSSIAN QUARTER		NATIVE QUARTER	
Houses	..... 73	Houses	..... 2140
Orthodox churches	..... 2	Schools	..... 5
Synagogues	..... 2	Native schools	..... 22
Mosques	..... 58	Medresse	..... 1
Military hospital	..... 1		

together with the administrative bureau of the sectional commissioner, besides district military head-

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quarters, a district court, and a post and telegraph office.

In respect of trade Turkestan occupies a prominent place. The great bulk of the raw products of the nomad cattle-farming industry is brought to it for the purpose of exchanging with articles of Russian manufacture. The yearly returns of the bazaars amount to 4,000,000 roubles; an increase upon this sum is expected now that in the Karatavski Mountains, which are close at hand, lead mines have been discovered. The town revenue is 19,350 roubles.

The Tashkent district is more densely populated and possesses a more productive soil than Chimkent. The mineral resources, too, present greater promise while the trade returns reach a total of 50,000,000 roubles a year. Merchandise comes from Siberia into Orenburg and Tashkent; while, in addition, there are the local products and those from the interior of European Russia. The line serves, also, as the shortest route between Tashkent and the rich corn region at Chelyabinsk and Kurgan. Undoubtedly it will assist to supply the whole of Turkestan with Siberian corn, thereby setting free some of the land now under corn for the cultivation of cotton. Further, it connects Tashkent with the centre of the mining industry in the Ural Mountains; and dense streams of Russian colonisation and trade pass by it into the heart of Central Asia.

The prosperity introduced both into Orenburg and Tashkent by the creation of railway communication between these two centres will exercise a very bene-

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ficial effect upon the capacity of their markets. Already improvement has been marked, the flow of fresh trade through these new channels following closely upon the advance of the construction parties. The period available for statistics does not represent the effect of the new railway upon local trade.

The passenger traffic into Tashkent over the Central Asian line was:

1901	
ARRIVALS	DEPARTURES
48,515	47,213

During the few years which have elapsed since the figures were compiled the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway has been opened, this happy accomplishment at once becoming a factor of the greatest economic importance in the commerce of Central Asia.

CHAPTER II

THE KHANATE OF BOKHARA

THE Khanate of Bokhara, across which lies the direct line of any advance upon Afghanistan, is the most important of the Russian protected states in Central Asia. It is situated in the basin of the Amu Daria between the provinces of Trans-Caspia on the west, of Samarkand and Ferghana on the north and east; while, in the south, the course of the Oxus separates, along 500 versts of the frontier, the dominions of Bokhara from those of Afghanistan.

The area occupied by Bokhara, including the sub-territories Darwaz, Roshan, and Shignan situated upon the western slopes of the Pamirs, amounts to 80,000 square miles, over which in the western part certain salt marshes and desolate stretches of sandy desert extend. The eastern area is confined by the rugged chains of the Alai and Trans-Alai systems, the Hissar Mountains, the immediate prolongation of the Alai Range and crowned with perpetual snow, attaining considerable altitude. This group divides the basins of the Zerafshan and Kashka Daria from the basin of the Amu Daria. The rivers of Bokhara belong to the Amu Daria system, the Oxus flowing

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for 490 versts through the Khanate itself. Constant demands for purposes of irrigation are made upon its waters, as well as upon the waters of its many tributaries, a fact which rapidly exhausts the lesser streams. In the western portion of the Khanate the Zerafshan River is the great artery; and although it possesses a direct stream only 214 versts in length it supplies a system of canals, the aggregate length of which amounts to more than 1000 versts. These again are divided to supply a further thousand channels, from which the water actually used for irrigating the various settlements and fields is finally drawn. The second most important river in the western part of the Khanate is the Kashka Daria, which waters the vast oases of Shakhri, Syabz, and Karshine. In the eastern areas numerous streams are fed by the snows and glaciers of the Alai Mountain system.

The western region of Bokhara possesses an extremely dry climate which, while hot in summer, tends to emphasise the severe cold of the winter months. Occasionally at that time the Amu Daria freezes, when the ice remains about the river for two or three weeks. The break-up of winter is manifested by heavy rains which, falling in February, continue until the middle of March, when, after a short month of spring, a hot sun burns up the vegetation. At this period the nomadic tribes abandon the plains for the mountains, large areas of the Khanate now presenting the appearance of a sparsely populated desert in which the sole vegetation is

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found along the banks of the rivers or in oases watered by the canals. With the advent of autumn, the steppe once more reflects the movements of these people.

In its eastern part the altitude varies between 2500 and 8500 feet above sea-level. The climate, warm and mild in summer, is of undue severity in winter, the period of extreme cold lasting some four months. Snow, commencing to fall in October, remains upon the ground until April, the frosts always being severe. At such a season the winds, blowing from the north-east, possess an unusual keenness in contradistinction to the strong south-south-westerly winds which, prevailing in summer, are the precursor to burning sand-storms.

The total population of the Khanate amounts approximately to 2,500,000; the well-watered, flourishing oases bear in some places as many as 4000 people to the square mile. The steppe and mountainous regions are sparsely populated. The most important inhabited centres of the Khanate are as follows:

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

TOWN	POPULATION	TOWN	POPULATION
Bokhara	100,000	Hissar	15,000
Karshi	60,000	Shir Abad	20,000
Shaar	10,000	Karki	10,000
Guzar	25,000	Charjui	15,000
Kara Kul	5,000	Kermine	12,000
Ziadin	8,000	Kelif	7,000

According to ethnographic distribution the population falls into two divisions. To the first belong

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those of Turki extraction and to the second the Iranian group. Amongst those of Turki descent, the Uzbeks take the most prominent place, constituting not only a racial preponderance but the ruling power in the Khanate. Among the remaining constituents of the Turki division are the Turkomans (chiefly Ersaris) and the Kirghiz. To the Iranian category belong the Tajiks — the original inhabitants of the country, even now constituting the principal section of the population throughout its eastern and southern portions; the Sarts, a conglomeration of Turki and Iranian nationalities, comprise a considerable proportion of the urban and rural population. In smaller numbers are the various colonies of Jews, Afghans, Persians, Arabs, Armenians, Hindoos, and others. With the exception of the Jews and the Hindoos the entire population is Mohammedan.

It will be seen that the population is represented by sedentary, semi-nomadic, and nomadic classes. The first, constituting about 65 per cent. of the whole population, is distributed principally in the plains, a considerable proportion comprising Tajiks, Sarts, Jews, Persians, Afghans, and Hindoos. The semi-nomadic population forms about 15 per cent., consisting partly of Uzbeks, Turkomans, and Tajiks dwelling in the hills. The nomads, who make up 20 per cent. of the population, live in the steppes of the western portion of the Khanate, in Darwaz and along the slopes of the Hissar Mountains. They comprise Uzbeks, Turkomans, and Kirghiz.

The soil, in general adapted to agriculture, yields

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with irrigation excellent harvests. The amount of cultivated land in the Khanate is little in excess of 8000 square miles; but, in order to make full use of the waters of the Amu Daria, Surkan, Kafirnigan, and Waksh Rivers, a large expenditure would be required, the present system of irrigation being very inadequate. Apart from cotton, which is exported in the raw state to the value of several million poods annually, and the silk industry, which, owing to disease among the worms, has deteriorated, the chief agricultural interest lies in the production of fruit, the produce of the orchards forming a staple food during the summer months. As a consequence, many different varieties of grapes, peaches, apricots, melons, watermelons, plums, apples, and pears are cultivated in the several gardens and orchards. Cattle-farming is conducted extensively in the valleys of the Hissar and Alai Ranges and in Darwaz; in Kara Kul, situated in the vast Urta Chul steppe between the towns of Bokhara and Karsi, is the home of the famous caracal sheep. Other industries are the manufacture of leathern goods: shoes, saddles, saddle-cloths; metal and pottery ware; while a staple product, employed in the manufacture of felts, carpets, and the clothes of the people, is cotton wool.

The yearly budget of the Khanate amounts to 8,000,000 roubles, 1,005,000 roubles of which are spent upon the army. The standing army, comprising Guards, battalions of the line, cavalry regiments, a brigade of mounted rifles, and a small corps of artillerists, possesses a strength of 15,000 men with

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twenty guns. In addition there is a militia liable for duty in case of necessity but, equally with its more imposing sister service, of little practical utility.

The city of Bokhara is surrounded by massive walls which were built in the ninth century, 28 feet in height, 14 feet in thickness at the base, with 131 towers, and pierced at irregular intervals by eleven gates. These ramparts contain, within a circuit of $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles, an area of 1760 acres. The population numbers some hundred thousand and the variety of types included in this estimate is immense. The Tajiks, who predominate, are well favoured in their appearance; they have clear, olive complexions with black eyes and hair. Polite, hard-working, and intelligent, they possess considerable aptitude for business. Against these excellent traits, however, must be noted the fact that they are inclined to cowardice and dishonesty. On this account they are regarded with contempt by the Uzbeks, a race whose physical characteristics cause them to resemble the rude warriors of the Osmanlis who supplanted the Cross by the Crescent in the fifteenth century. Independent in their bearing, the Uzbeks possess high courage together with something of the inborn dignity of the Turk; but they are distinguished from that nation by a greater grossness of manner and less individuality. Equally with the Kirghiz and the Turkomans, the Uzbeks are divided in their classes between sedentary people and nomads. Then, also, in this dædalus there is the Jewish community, which is traditionally believed to have migrated hither

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from Baghdad. The Jews in Bokhara are forbidden to ride in the streets; while they must wear a distinctive costume, the main features of which include a small black cap, a dressing-gown of camel's hair, and a rope girdle. They are relegated to a filthy ghetto; and, although they may not be killed with impunity by a good believer, they are subjected to such grinding persecution that their numbers have been reduced in the course of half a century to something less than 75 per cent. of the 10,000 who originally composed the colony. The Jew in Bokhara shares with the Hindoo settler there the profits of money-lending and the two classes are keen hands at a bargain. In addition to the Hindoos there are a few Mohammedan merchants from Peshawar who are concerned in the tea trade. Other races among the moving mass comprise Afghans, Persians, and Arabs, the variety of features shown by a Bokharan crowd suggesting so many different quarters as their place of origin that one would need to recite the map of High Asia to describe them.

The town of Bokhara is supplied with water from the Shari Rud Canal, which, in turn, is fed by the Zerafshan River. A considerable amount is stored locally in special reservoirs, of which there are 85. As their contents are seldom changed the supply soon assumes a thick, greenish consistency, the use of which is extremely detrimental to the health of the inhabitants. The deficiency of fresh water for drinking purposes, the oppressiveness of the summer heat, and the propinquity of numerous

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cemeteries, together with the dust and dirt of the crowded streets, make life in Bokhara almost intolerable. The city, too, is a hot-bed of disease, malaria being specially prominent at certain seasons. The *filaria medinesis*, a worm of burrowing propensity, is endemic.

In Bokhara, as in most Eastern cities, the feminine element is entirely excluded from the street. The emancipation of women has not begun in the Middle East; should any have to venture forth they are muffled up so carefully that not even a suggestion of their personal appearance can be gathered. Yet there is a certain charm and mystery in the flitting of the veiled Beauty and one would fain linger to speculate further, if such dallying with fortune were not eminently injudicious. If there is no revelation of the female form divine in the bazaar there is, at least, a wonderful wealth of gorgeous colouring. In time of festival the scene, welling up to break away in endless ripples, suggests the myriad beauties of a rainbow splintered into a million fragments.

There is relief, too, from the burning sunshine in the cool, lofty passages: shady, thronged, and tortuous they extend in endless succession for mile after mile. The roof of the bazaar is a rude contrivance of undressed beams upon which there is a covering of beaten clay. Behind each stall is an alcove in the wall serving as home and office to the keen-visaged merchant who presides. In this little recess, piled upon innumerable shelves, rammed into little niches or strewn upon the floor, are the different



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articles which his trade requires. Carpets and rugs of harmonious hues, a wealth of parti-coloured shawls, innumerable lengths of dress pieces, cutlery, trinkets, snuff-boxes, gorgeous velvets and brilliant silks, the shimmer of satin and the coarse tracing of gold-wire embroidery, are here all displayed in prodigal confusion. As to the sources of supply, a good deal of the merchandise is the produce of Russian markets. For the rest, a certain proportion comes from Germany and a small amount is imported from France. England, it may be noted, is not represented at all.

The money-changers have a quarter to themselves, as have also the metal-workers and the vendors of silks and velvets. At every corner and odd twist of the passages there are the sweet-sellers, the tea merchants, and the booths for food. China is the principal source of the tea supply, but of late a certain amount has found its way into Bokhara from the gardens of India and Ceylon. It is before the steaming samovars that the crowd of prospective purchasers is apt to be thickest. Beyond the bazaar boundaries are the wonderful relics of a bygone grandeur — imposing buildings and mosques, touched with the glory of the sunlight and capacious enough to contain within their courtyards 10,000 people at one time.

Although the chief interest of Bokhara centres in the portion just described, its public buildings well repay leisurely examination. The Registan, the market-place of the north-west quarter, acts as a central zone. On one side standing upon a vast

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artificial mound is the citadel or Ark, its mighty walls forming a square of 450 yards, its parapet crenellated, and its corners set with towers. The building dates from the era of the Samanides. In addition to the Amir's palace the walls of the Ark enclose the houses of the chief ministers, the treasury, the state prison, and various offices. The entrance to the citadel, which is defended by two imposing towers, is closed by massive gates above which there is a clock. None save the highest officials are permitted to enter the Ark; visitors, irrespective of rank, are compelled to dismount at its doors and to proceed on foot to the Amir's quarters. Opposite the Ark stands the largest mosque in Bokhara, the Medjidi Kalan or Kok Gumbaz — the Mosque of the Green Cupola — which the Amir attends every Friday when he is in residence.

A smaller market-place, where transactions in cotton are carried out, is surrounded by several imposing edifices that rise with infinite grace to the sky, besides countless minarets of prayer acting as landmarks to the faithful. Here is the Great Mosque, the Masjid-i-Jama, while facing it is the Medresse Mir-i-Arab. This latter building ranks first among the many stately colleges of Bokhara. Near at hand is the Minar Kalan, 36 feet at the base and tapering to a height of over 200 feet. From a small platform just below the lofty pinnacle, miscreants were hurled to destruction in bygone days. With the exception of these buildings the city contains little of antiquity.

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For its size the native quarter is a centre of the greatest importance; and its streets, although mean and sinuous, are filled by a crowd most typical of Asia. Ten thousand students receive instruction in its schools.

The houses, which are set in small compounds approached by narrow alleys, are composed of clay with low roofs and without windows. A hole in the roof suffices for a chimney, and the open door affords light.

CHAPTER III

THE PROVINCE OF SAMARKAND

SAMARKAND, the administrative centre of the province of the same name and founded in 1871, is a close reproduction of a large Indian cantonment. The streets are wide, well paved, fringed with tall poplars, and set with shops which are kept by Europeans. For the Russians, as the centre of the province and the location of army headquarters, it has special importance. Although without any architectural pretensions — the buildings are all one-storey structures on account of frequent visitations from earthquakes — its comparatively lofty position makes it an agreeable station and one of the most attractive gathering-places for Europeans in Asiatic Russia. The city is situated upon the south-western slopes of the Chupan Ata Range, 7 versts from the Zerafshan River. The close proximity of the hills naturally influences its rainfall, which is greatest in March and April. The period from June to September is dry; and by February or March the trees are in bloom. By a happy choice in construction it has been planned upon exceptionally generous lines which, although imparting to the outskirts a desolate aspect, have

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been the cause of securing to the community a number of spacious squares, around which are placed the barracks and certain parks. The principal square, named after General Ivanoff, a former Governor of the province, is Ivanovski Square. Another interesting memento of the Russian conquest of Turkestan is situated between the military quarter and the green avenues of the Russian town, in a spot where the heroes who fell in the defence of the citadel in 1868 were buried. At the same place, too, a memorial has been erected to Colonel Sokovnin and Staff-Captain Konevski, who were killed in 1869.

The population of Samarkand at the census of 1897 was 54,900.

According to the statistics of 1901, which are the most recently available, these figures had increased by a few thousands; they were then 58,194.

Russians	10,621	Sarts	40,184
Poles	315	Kirghiz	36
Germans	378	Afghans	186
Armenians.....	335	Persians	237
Jews	4,949	Hindoos.....	10

The native quarter, which is separated from the Russian town by the Abramovski Boulevard — so named in honour of General Abramoff, another military governor of the province — covers an area of 4629 dessiatines. It was built by Timur the Lame. The streets with few exceptions are narrow, winding, and unpaved; the houses are of baked mud, mean and cramped, with flat earthen roofs and no windows. The value of Government property in

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the Russian and native areas of the city is estimated at 4,077,681 roubles. The city revenue approximates 147,616 roubles. The native quarter is the great commercial centre of the province and the trade returns for the city and its surrounding district amount to 17,858,900 roubles out of 24,951,320 roubles for the entire province. Of the squares the most celebrated is the Registan, with a length of 35 sagues and width of 30 sagues. It is bounded by three large mosques: the Tillah Kori — the Gold Covered; Ulug Beg; and Shir Dar — the Lion Bearing.

The Registan is the heart of ancient Samarkand. Prior to the advent of the Russians, pardon and punishment were dealt from it to the people by their rulers, executions performed and wars declared, as the authorities pleased. Even up to the present day the Registan has preserved in some degree its importance as a popular tribune. From it self-constituted orators, holy men and politicians, expound their doctrines before a people gathered together from the most distant corners of the continent of Asia. The Registan is only one feature of this delightful city; for here, too, are the stately ruins of the Bibi Khanum, tomb of the wife of Timur, and the Gur Amir where Timur's remains lie amid a scene eloquent in its simple grandeur. Although, unfortunately, this building has been spoilt by attempts at restoration, its encrusted tiles are as beautiful as when they were made, 400 years ago. Here, too, is the resting-place of the Shah Zindeh;

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and in its Urda or ancient citadel, now a weak, bastioned fort, is the Kok Tash — the coronation-stone of the descendants of Timur. The charm of the Gur Amir is supreme. Within its dome, before the horse-hair standard, the sheer force of association and the infinite suggestion of the spot make one feel the great presence of this renowned soldier. Beneath the cupola there is a nephrite cenotaph; perhaps, as Colonel C. E. de la Poer Beresford has said, the largest block of green jade in the world. Close to it other tombs, lighter in colour, are erected to the memory of Ulug Beg and Mir Sayid, Timur's grandson and tutor. Around these is a carved gypsum balustrade and in the crypt below, under a simple brick tomb, lies the vanquisher of Toktamish Khan, of Sultan Bayazid, of Persia, the Caucasus, and India — Timur himself.

In its economic aspect Samarkand occupies a very important position. Although scarcely serving as a mart to the produce of British India and Afghanistan, it is nevertheless a great emporium of trade. The roads, leading to the town or from it, as the case may be, are an index of its wide-reaching commercial influence. They run from Samarkand to Karki on the Amu Daria; and to Tashkent *viâ* Jizak; while Khojand, Khokand, Namangan, Andijan, Margelan, and Osh are all in direct communication with it. Caravans from the east and north, from Persia and from China, carts perched on two gigantic wheels or transport bullocks laden with skins, even sheep carrying small packages — all are impressed into ser-

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vice and seem to be revolving in a constant stream round Samarkand. There is a steady traffic and the numerous bazaars are the centre of a brisk trade in skins and pelts. Unlike the bazaars of Bokhara, along the sides of which the merchants have their stalls, the passageways are open to the heavens. After the wonderful picture of Asiatic life presented by Bokhara, there are those who complain of a feeling of disappointment at the more subdued current which flows through Samarkand. Nevertheless the town has a charming setting. The snow-peaks of the Hissar chain and the curtain of enchanting fields and spreading vineyards, which hides the hideous aspect of the Kara Kum, add to the pleasure which is derived from the delicate mingling of the colours of the street life. There is, indeed, a very special type found in the bazaars of Bokhara and Samarkand. Dressed in the choicest of silks, so soft that it suggests the rustle of the wind through the peach-trees and dyed in tones of yellow, green, and brown, in shades of magenta and purple, in a note of blue reflecting the sky or touched with the blush of a red rose, are men of fine stature. They move with their long-skirted gowns clasped at the waist and their silken trousers tucked into brown, untanned boots, the seams of which are delicately embroidered. Every individual reserves to himself a most exclusive manner, representing the embodiment of dignity. There is such an air of contentment about the gaily-clad crowd as it passes from stall to stall; such perfect self-possession, suggested

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humility, and independence, that the difference in size between Bokhara and Samarkand goes unnoticed; the atmosphere being no less pleasing, the picture no less acceptable, in the smaller city than in the capital.

As the administrative focus of the Syr Daria Province, Tashkent is the principal city of Russian Turkestan and the seat of the Governor-General. The Russian quarter at once recalls memories of other spheres of Central Asia. The streets are wide and long. Dusty but much frequented, they are bordered by high, white poplars set in double rows, while upon each side there run the gurgling waters of the irrigation canals. The city is laid out in a sector of a circle, three great boulevards radiating from the cathedral, a handsome, octagonal building in freestone. Surmounted by the dome and golden cross, which mark in Russia all Orthodox places of worship, it occupies the centre of Konstantinovski Square. It contains the remains of General von Kauffman, Governor-General of Russian Turkestan between 1867 and 1882 and, incidentally, conqueror of Khiva in 1873 and of Samarkand in 1868. He died May 4, 1882.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISTRICT OF TASHKENT

TASHKENT, situated upon the slopes of the Tian Shan 172 sagues above sea-level, lies in the midst of an extensive oasis whose fertile acres are watered by the river Chirchik and its tributaries. January is the coldest month, while July is the hottest. The prevailing breezes are north and north-east; but the characteristic peculiarity of the climate is the absence of wind, which makes the high temperature in the summer particularly oppressive. Spring weather begins in March; the hot season, commencing in May, continues until the middle of August. Speaking generally the place possesses the attributes of the climate in the plains of Central Asia, while distinguished by its greater yearly rainfall — 384 millimetres — in consequence of the proximity of the mountains. The drinking-water question, an ever-attendant difficulty in Central Asia, is no less acute in Tashkent, constituting a serious drawback to conditions of life there. An ample supply of water is available for irrigation, the Chirchik River, as well as numerous wells and springs, being diverted for this purpose.

The Russian quarter, founded in 1865 after the

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capture of the native town from the Khan of Khokand upon June 15 by the Russian forces under General Chernaieff, is separated from the native by the Angar Canal. It is divided into official and residential areas, and contains many large streets. The Sobornaya, in which are situated the best shops, is perhaps more animated than any other thoroughfare in the town, while the Romanovski Street, which crosses the official quarter, is devoted principally to the Government offices. Three wide streets — the Gospitalnaya, Dukhovskaya, and the Kailuski Prospekt — along which it is proposed to erect business premises, also run from this quarter to the station. The residential part is of much later construction; its population is more scattered, the houses are surrounded with dense gardens and the streets are wider. The houses in each section are, for the most part, single storeyed. The chief public works are the Alexandrovski Park, Konstantinovski Square, Gorodskoi Garden, and the gardens surrounding the residence of the Governor-General. The Turkestan Public Library, founded by General von Kauffman with the object of furthering the education of the country, now contains more than 40,000 volumes.

The permanent garrison is never less than 10,000 men. Barracks and store-house accommodation for military supplies abound in the place. Between the spacious station and the Russian city, a distance of one verst, there are very commodious infantry quarters. A long row of buildings, somewhat more

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remote and erected upon slightly rising ground, contains the lines of the Cossack establishment. The climate of Tashkent is too unhealthy to be endured in the hot weather. In summer the garrison moves to Chigman, a defile 671 sagues above sea-level, situated 80 or 90 versts beyond the town on the river Chirchik, where there is a sanatorium for the troops. The families of the officers usually pass the season at the village of Troitzki, 25 versts from Tashkent. Five versts from the city is Nikolski, the first Russian settlement founded in the Syr Daria Province. Lying between it and the Russian town is the native quarter. Recalling Andijan, Margelan, Khokand, and Osh, it lacks the animation of the streets of Bokhara and is destitute of the architectural beauties of Samarkand. Surrounded on three sides by gardens, the fourth side touches the Russian town with which it is connected, as also with the station, by means of a horse tramway. It is divided into four parts called respectively Kukchinski, Sibzyarski, Shaikhantaurski, and Bish Agatchski. Each is separated into districts, these sub-divisions totalling 206 in all.

The two quarters of Tashkent occupy to-day an area of 20 square versts. Forty years ago the site of the Russian settlement covered no more ground than that required by the village which contained the garrison. This original section has now disappeared, becoming merged as time passed and the colony expanded with the Fortress Esplanade, while the population has similarly increased. In May,

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1871, the combined figures of the native and Russian colony gave only 2701 inhabitants. In 1901 the census returns showed the population to be:

RUSSIANS		NATIVES	
Men	16,416	Men.....	70,903
Women	<u>16,926</u>	Women	<u>59,019</u>
Total	33,342	Total	129,922

CHAPTER V

THE DISTRICT OF MERV

ALTHOUGH the importance of Merv, as a military district, has increased since the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway was opened, the numbers of the resident population continue to decline. This proceeds from the unhealthy conditions that obtain locally. Malaria, the most prevalent complaint, runs a very level course throughout the year. Between July and November it becomes exceptionally virulent; and a recent Medical Commission returned the causes of the sickness in Merv as due solely to the presence of a specific organism which, passing from the soil into the water, was absorbed by the inhabitants. So rife is the disease that it is estimated that not one person escapes its attacks in the course of the year. The highest sick-rate occurs between the months of July and November, when it is responsible for 80 per cent. of the "Daily State" in the garrison and district hospitals. Merv malaria generally attacks the liver and kidneys, rapidly affecting the spleen. Every effort has been made to cope with its ravages. Among the attempts was a scheme for the introduction of a new system of irrigation and the purification of the

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water system, to which the Minister of War assigned 63,000 roubles. Hitherto the drinking-water, derived from the Murghab, has been altogether unfit for consumption. Apart from possible contamination in the sources of the water-supply, there is no doubt that much of the malaria in Merv arises from constant displacement of soil in the oasis; similar conditions prevail, usually for three or four years, in all tropical and semi-tropical countries whenever agricultural or other development requires the breaking of ground.

Certain features encountered in Merv — such as groups of chaffering natives, clusters of small, open shops, dusty trees, open drains, and sweltering heat — are strangely reminiscent of India, but the absence of punkahs and the high price of ice prove that the Russians in Central Asia are indifferent to comfort. Even the hotels make no attempt to relieve the effect of the temperature; while, in general, the houses are built without verandahs and the windows are unfitted with *jalousies*. Within the houses, too, conditions are most trying, the policy of every one being to admit the flies and exclude the air. Trade manages to thrive; and a weekly market is held on Mondays upon a plain to the east of the town. Thither all roads converge; thronged with two-wheeled Persian carts, ill-fed baggage horses burdened with goods, and gurgling camels. Standing solitary and forlorn is the patient ass whose lament is so eloquently described by Mr. Shoemaker, where that author says:

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Oh, my brother from that far western land where even a little ass like me has some chance to sleep in quiet, blame me not, I beseech you, that I weep. You have seen how dignified and self-contained my brethren are in Egypt; but there we never carry more than two of the heathen at the most, whereas here, you see, it is always three and sometimes four; therefore I weep, oh my brother, and will not be comforted.

Fair days in the town bazaars are held upon Sundays and Thursdays, when the Hebrew, Persian, and Armenian merchants are surrounded by crowds of Tekkes from neighbouring villages. Disposed for sale are the innumerable commodities of the Middle East — rice from Meshed; fruits from Samarkand; silk, sweetmeats, and velvet from Bokhara; cheap cutlery, trinkets, leather goods, and samovars from Russia; beautiful embroidery and shawls from the stores of the wealthier merchants; carpets from Herat; sheepskins from the country-side; ploughshares and knives from local forges; and relics of Old Merv. Prices are high; but the Turkomans make their purchases very willingly, unconscious of the contrast between their present peaceful demeanour and the attitude which distinguished them when they were robbers of the country-side.

Apart from the garrison the population numbers less than 5000.

The revenues derived from the native town amount to 42,000 roubles a year and the volume of business annually turned over is a little short of 100,000 roubles. The prosperity of the place is attested by the individual wealth of merchants attending

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the bazaars. Many of these men live in spacious houses, the majority of the natives frequenting the bazaar being well-to-do and apparently contented. Trade is brisk and, as the Russians have imposed but a few taxes and the Turkomans are exempt from military service, no particular difficulty attends the earning of the daily wage.

It is said occasionally that the disasters which attended Russia in Manchuria have stimulated the ambitions and desires of the Mohammedan population of Asiatic Russia to throw off the yoke of Muscovite rule. Hence it is possible that the reading of the existing situation in Central Asia, which is here presented, may not be accepted. In point of fact, the Mohammedan attitude towards Russian rule in Mid-Asia has no relation whatever to the outcome of the late war in Manchuria; nor was it influenced in any way by the developments of that struggle. Contrary belief is based upon the impression that the animus entertained against the Russians by the races of British India, where it is now assumed by the ignorant and very foolish that Russian arms would be at once defeated in any Indo-Russian conflict, exists equally among the Mohammedan population of Asiatic Russia. Native opinion in Central Asia knew almost nothing of the course, character, and result of the Russo-Japanese War. Even if suspicions of the actual results were entertained, the constant display of troops, which was made in all Central Asiatic centres of importance during the progress of the campaign, would have dis-

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pelled the belief that the Russian military resources were straitened. Apart from this fact, the public in Central Asia were supplied only with those versions of the truth which were most acceptable — and useful — to the Russian *amour propre*. It will be seen, therefore, that wherever Mohammedan feeling may be opposed in the Tsar's Asiatic dominions to Russian domination, such sentiment is spontaneous and as deeply rooted or easily appeased as the circumstances which may have excited it dictate. It is well to understand this phase of the situation in Central Asia since, in itself, it is very significant.

Merv, perhaps, is a case in point. On the surface the aspect of affairs there is placid enough; but the Russians in Central Asia have read so many effective lessons to their subject races that at best opinion upon the possible chances of an outbreak is a blind hazard. Doubtless religious and racial prejudices are smouldering; yet, if there is any feeling of discontent, it must arise from an animosity born of pure fanaticism. Certainly the Russian rule in Mid-Asia is tolerant — now that the lesson has been taught — and there is neither religious nor educational interference. Moreover trade, fostered by very careful protection, prospers; and at least one secret of success in any Central Asian system of government is to let well alone and appeal to the vulgar through their pocket. This principle the Russians support with admirable patience, taking precautions at the same time that their benevolent administration shall not be endangered by too much license

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in the matter of importing or possessing arms. A native rising would be difficult upon this account alone; while it should be remembered, too, that many years of leisured ease have brought about considerable deterioration in the instinctive passion for rape, bloodshed, and plunder, which distinguished, only a few years ago, the inhabitants of these Central Asian Khanates.

Again, always presupposing the steady loyalty of the great bulk of the European troops, Russia has not enrolled any large number of native recruits in regions beyond the Caspian Sea; although her policy in the Caucasus has not been quite so exclusive. The success of any native insurrectionary movement in Trans-Caspia would depend, therefore, upon the precise amount of support that it received from any disaffected sections of the Caucasian establishment that might be incorporated with the Russo-European army on service in the Khanates. No doubt the wide area covered by the rebellion in the Caucasus will encourage the Caucasian element in the Trans-Caspian army to be troublesome; and, since the Caucasian races in a measure are akin with the Central Asian peoples, mutual sympathy may give rise to positive revolt in Central Asia. Between the European soldiers and the native races, however, there is little in common; and unless revolutionary agents from St. Petersburg, Moscow, or the larger centres of disturbance contaminate the adherence of the men, there is really nothing to cause them to listen to any seditious overtures which might emanate

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from native sources. It is very easy in Central Asia to remove the rails of the permanent way or to interrupt telegraphic communication, since the railway and the wires run for hundreds of miles unguarded and at the mercy of any wandering, discontented miscreant. Such instances of disaffection would be sporadic. Difficulties of combination — if the great distances separating Khiva, Merv, Bokhara, and Tashkent were ignored, which they cannot be if the position of affairs is to be appraised properly — would alone prevent any simultaneous co-operation; while whatever unanimity might be disclosed by actively hostile parties of native or European revolutionaries, the forces at the disposal of the military authorities must enable them to suppress the movement rapidly and at once.

Of course the agitation in European Russia cannot leave Russians in Central Asia unaffected; continuation of the widespread irruptions of disorder in European Russia obviously imparts a new and most serious complexion to affairs in Asiatic Russia. Moreover signs of unrest, in consequence of interference by revolutionary agents from St. Petersburg, have already been displayed. At Askhabad the officers were locked in their quarters; at Kushkinski Post 200 soldiers joined in a strike of railway and telegraph officials. Further, at the instigation of Sokoloff, an engineer, and Simonoff, an engine-fitter, a variety of farcical intentions were proclaimed, the main outcome of this signal act of rebellion culminating in a little temporary dislocation of the railway

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and telegraph services and the arrest of the ring-leaders. None the less, the activity of these revolutionary agents does constitute a possible menace to the peace of Mid-Asia; for, while the native population reckes little of the wiles of European agitators and can be overawed by the authorities, the situation, where it concerns the ultimate effect of the revolutionary propaganda upon the Russo-European army, rests upon the knees of the gods. There, unfortunately, it must remain; emphasising the fact that, on account of the means of checking the dissemination of revolutionary heresies and the growth of the operations of the agitators in Central Asia which the Russian authorities have at hand, the chances are much against any violent or widespread upheaval of the peace in these territories.

CHAPTER VI

FROM TASHKENT TO MERV

THE first station beyond Tashkent, travelling towards Merv, is Kauffmanskaya, where begins the practice of associating with the scenes of their conquests the names of officers who have achieved distinction in Turkestan. It is a pleasant custom and serves to perpetuate history in a manner which might be copied with advantage in India. In this instance General von Kauffman, who became eventually an *aide-de-camp* to the Tsar, was the first Governor-General of Russian Turkestan.

Between Tashkent and Kauffmanskaya, which, although insignificant, is equipped with hospital accommodation for six patients, the railway crosses by an iron bridge of 8 sagues the Salar River, itself a tributary of the more important Chirchik. The line then passes Zangi-ata and the post station of Nialbash, crossing the Kur Kulduk arik by an iron bridge 3 sagues in length, and running near Vrevskaya through the Chirchik Valley, a region of special interest to archæologists. Stari Tashkent or Old Tashkent, rich in historical associations, is in this neighbourhood. It was inhabited at one time by the Sakis, who, in bygone centuries, offered a

stubborn resistance to Alexander of Macedon. Now it is only an insignificant hamlet, mere flotsam which has been thrown up and left by the advancing tide of Russian conquest. Lying to the east of Stari Tashkent and opposite Kirshul upon the left bank of the Chirchik River are the ruins of Shuturket or Ushturket — the Town of Camels; in the country between it and Binket, by which name Tashkent is known among the natives, there are other ruins.

After skirting Bodorodski and Kaunchi the station of Syr Darinskaya, lying about 1 verst from the hill and lake of Utch Tubeht, follows, the line crossing the Bossu-su arik by a second bridge of 5 sagues. Until this point the general direction has been south-west. Ten versts from Syr Darinskaya station, at a point where it crosses the Syr Daria by a four-span iron bridge 160 sagues in length, the railway runs by the ancient fortress and lake of Urumbai and turns to the east to thread the hills which surround Utch Tubeht Lake.

The point now arrives where the train enters the region distinguished by the Emperor Nicholas I Canal, an extensive system of irrigation from the waters of the Syr Daria. These works, which the Ministry of Agriculture introduced, have brought more than 100,000 acres of the Golodnaya steppe under colonisation. It is due to the initiative and generosity of the Grand Duke Nicholas Konstantinovitch that the scheme was executed and its success is illustrated by the fact that seven villages — Nikolaievski, Nadejdinski, Verkhni, Nijni Volinski, Kon-

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nogvardeiski, Obyetovanni, and Romanovski — have been established upon the reclaimed areas. In the main they are devoted to the cultivation of the smaller crops, although one or two are given up to the growing of cotton. The prosperity of the undertaking entails elaborate precautions; in order that the works should be unobstructed the head waters of the system are watched continuously by relays of guards.

The Golodnaya zone of cultivation extends only a verst or so beyond Golodnaya station; between this little oasis and Chernaievo, the next station, there is a barren wilderness. After leaving Golodnaya and crossing the Emperor Nicholas I Canal by an iron bridge 8 sages in length, the line proceeds north-east beyond the Syr Daria, where it turns sharply to the east in order to make the junction with the main line from Kraslovodsk to Andijan. Owing to the lack of cultivation and the scarcity of population no commercial importance can be ascribed to Chernaievo. Attached to the little station is a small hospital with a capacity of 10 beds, while the railway workshops employ a permanent staff of 100 workmen. The depot at this point, on account of the junction between the line from Tashkent and the extension to Andijan, is out of proportion with the requirements of the neighbourhood. Of course, here as at every station on the line, there is a large store of naphtha, 50,000 poods being held against emergency in the naphtha reservoir.

In relation to Chernaievo, it would be a pity to

avoid mention of the distinguished soldier who, subsequently Governor-General of Turkestan and dying in disgrace in August of 1898, gave his name to the place. Under happier circumstances Chernaieff might have become the Clive of Central Asia. It was he who, suffering defeat before Tashkent on October 2, 1854, and determining to remove so signal a stain from the prestige of the Russian forces, repeated his attack at a moment when he had received explicit orders from Alexander II to refrain from doing so. With the Imperial despatches in his pocket he led his small forces to the onslaught and it was only when victory had been secured that he made himself acquainted with his instructions. The reply he despatched to his august sovereign is as historical as the famous signal which Nelson displayed at Trafalgar. "Sire," he wrote, "Your Majesty's order, forbidding me to take Tashkent, has reached me only in the city itself which I have taken and place at your Majesty's feet." The Tsar was angry at the breach of discipline and, although he accepted the fruits of General Chernaieff's daring, he never restored his officer to favour. Superseded by General Romanovski and stung to the quick by this treatment, Chernaieff retired from the service, a broken-hearted man.

Beyond Chernaievo, situated amid most arid surroundings and in a locality where the water is salt, is Obrutchevo, so called in honour of the former Chief of the General Staff, General Obrutcheff. Nine versts further is Lomakino, which derives its name

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from General Lomakin, an officer of repute in the Turkoman Expedition of 1879. Between Lomakino and Jizak the line enters the province of Samarkand.

Jizak station, named after a district town in the province of Samarkand, is situated in the valley of the Sanzar River in a locality which is both thickly populated and well cultivated. At the workshops there is only a staff of nine workmen, while the railway depot possesses little more than engine sheds and a naphtha reservoir of 10,000 poods. The water-supply of the station is drawn from the Sanzar River. Water for the consumption of the Russian quarter of the town, which lies at the foot of the northern slope of the Nura Mountains, 2 versts from the railway, comes from the Russki arik.

In consequence of the deficiency of fresh water Jizak is an unhealthy town, more malaria prevailing in the locality than in any other part of Turkestan, with the exception of the Murghab and Kushk Valleys. The Russian quarter, which was formerly the Kluchevi fortress, possesses a number of public gardens. There are only thirty-six private houses in the settlement and these, in the main, are occupied by officials. The public buildings include two schools, a military hospital, a military Orthodox church, the Chancellery of the District Governor, the District Treasury, and other offices. The population at the last census was 17,000.

The native quarter is of far greater commercial importance than the Russian town and is situated

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3 versts from it. Indeed, the latter is almost solely a cantonment.

The town revenue is 22,842 roubles and the value of Government property rather less than 600,000 roubles. There are no hotels in either quarter.

The native bazaars are supposed to be identical with the town of Gaza through which the armies of Alexander passed in the fourth century B.C. More recently the Russians converted it into a strong military post. At the time when it was assaulted by the Russian forces under General Romanovski, upon October 18, 1856, it was regarded as one of the most powerful fortresses in Central Asia. In those days the town was surmounted by a triple wall, 4 sages in thickness and $3\frac{1}{2}$ sages in height. High towers defended the interior walls, while upon the outer wall were mounted 53 pieces of artillery. At that time the strength of the garrison under the command of Alayar Khan was returned at 10,000 men.

A few versts before Jizak the line, running in a westerly direction along the southern border of the Golodnaya desert, crosses by an iron bridge, 8 sages in length, the Sais Khaneh ravine. Beyond Jizak and after passing through Milyautinskaya it enters the Ilyan Uta defile, through which flows the Sanzar River. This defile is the only existing pass in the Nuratinski Range and contains the famous Gates of Tamerlane. Beyond the gates there is the station of Kuropatkin, named after General Kuropatkin who so long presided over the destinies of Russia in Central Asia. From here the line pro-

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ceeds to cross the eastern slope of the Nura Range; barely 30 versts farther on it arrives at Rostovtsevo, which takes its name from a former Military Governor of the Ferghana province, Count Rostovtseff. Between Kuropatkino and this station the line crosses at the foot of the ascent of the Golun Mountains a bridge, 5 sagues in length, over the Balungur arik. From the slopes of the Golun Tau the railway traverses the watershed of the Zerafshan and Sanzar Rivers, reaching at 10 versts from Kuropatkino the highest elevation on the whole line, 403 sagues above sea-level. From this point the line then descends to Rostovtsevo, from where, after a short run of 30 versts, it arrives at Samarkand.

With Rostovtsevo there commences without doubt the most interesting section of the journey between Tashkent and Samarkand. The market of Samarkand has spread its influence for many miles along the line; and, as a consequence, there is a welcome note of freshness in the scene. In addition to the prosperity naturally suggested by the spectacle of a flourishing oasis, the railway affords a fleeting inspection of two important bridges. The first, an iron bridge of seven spans and 56 sagues in length, crosses the Zerafshan River, leaving on the right the Ark of Tamerlane and on the left a bold, lofty mountain crag. It rises from two stone buttresses and is supported by six iron pillars. The spans are 8 sagues in length and composed of four sections, the whole work reflecting the cantilever principle. It has been adapted to traffic, vehicles passing along

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either side of the permanent way. Beyond these landmarks the railway picks its way down the rocky declivity of the Zerafshan watershed towards the undulating, cultivated lands which extend between Chupan Ata ridge and the second bridge, which, thrown across the deep Obi Siab ravine 2 versts outside Samarkand, possesses a length of 30 sagues. It is constructed in iron of 3 spans, supported by stone abutments upon two stone buttresses.

The station of Samarkand, second in importance to Krasnovodsk, is 1415 versts from Krasnovodsk and 332 versts from Tashkent. In the station square there are a church, a hospital of twenty-five beds, two second-class schools, workshops and railway yards affording daily employment for 160 men. Like most stations of the first class it acts as a medium of distribution to a wide area, stimulating not only the industrial interests throughout the province but imparting also an impetus to the agricultural activities of the neighbourhood.

Djuma, the first station beyond Samarkand, is situated in a level, densely populated country. Barely thirty miles distant, and with it equally a station of the fourth class, is Nagornaya, which in turn gives place to Katta Kurgan. This town, an important district centre in the Samarkand Province, lies close to the railway in the midst of much luxuriant vegetation. Its altitude above sea-level is rather more than 222 sagues. The population numbers 10,219:

MOHAMMEDANS
8689

JEWS
1281

RUSSIANS
249

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Its streets are very wide and charmingly planted with high trees — poplars, acacias, willows, and white ash — watered by ariks supplied from the Narpai stream, itself a tributary of the Zerafshan River. Quite the most prominent feature is a large public garden surrounding the house of the Governor, while in connection with the public buildings there is a military church, a military hospital, a general hospital of twenty-five beds, and a Russian native school. There are, of course, the usual district offices. Military headquarters occupies a building to itself, a second affording domicile to the base staff of the Eighth Turkestan Rifle Battalion.

The native bazaar, an imposing centre, contains:

Mosques (smaller)	38	Theological schools	2
Synagogues	1	Native schools	30

In the main bazaar there are some 300 shops, the business transacted at them being concerned with the cotton industry and the production of vegetable oils. There is no hotel in either part of the town but there is an officers' club in the Russian quarter. The general revenue from all sources is about 38,000 roubles and the largest industrial concern associated with the trade of the district is the Turkestan Cotton Company, of which the annual trading balance is considerably in excess of half a million roubles. The development of cotton in the neighbourhood, to which the Turkoman villages Mitana Pefshanba and Chardar devote their energies, promises to become a highly valuable venture.

A few versts beyond Katta Kurgan the line crosses

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the border of the dominions of the Amir of Bokhara. The first station beyond the frontier is Zirabulak, so called from heights which frown down upon the railway from close at hand. This little ridge of hills forms an interesting link with the Russian conquest of Turkestan; it was here that a column under General von Kauffman routed the Bokharan forces on July 2, 1868. The battle practically decided the Russian mastery of Central Asia, the peace concluded by the Amir Sayid Mozaffar Eddin having been maintained down to the present time. The rich vegetation distinguishing the locality continues as far as the next station, Ziadin, where the line enters a cultivated zone which is watered from the Zerafshan and the Narpai streams. The town possesses a native population of 8000, with a revenue of rather less than 16,000 roubles. Traffic passing through the neighbourhood is concerned chiefly with the importation of goods from Russia and the export of cotton. Beyond Ziadin, which is administered by an important Beg, the line runs to Kermine, a station of the third class constructed to meet the convenience of the present Amir of Bokhara, who, previous to ascending the throne, had been the Beg of Kermine. The town, which has a population of 12,000, is dependent almost entirely upon the proceeds of the cotton industry. The native fort, standing in the town, has been converted into a Russian garrison, a battalion of the Turkestan Rifles occupying the post.

Melik, a small station occupying a position at the point where the line from Tashkent meets the Zeraf-

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shan River, has, unfortunately, nothing with which to commend itself. The surrounding steppe is destitute of vegetation and only sparsely inhabited. At Kizil steppe, which follows, there are a depot and workshops for a permanent staff of eighteen men. It stands within easy proximity of the four centres, Cidj Duvan, Adiz Abad, Vaganzi, and Bustan, where there is a combined population of 20,000.

The cultivation of cotton is the prominent characteristic of this region, and Kuyu Mazar, the next station, entirely derives its prosperity from the industry. In its immediate neighbourhood, moreover, there are several *kishlaks* devoted to it. A little further on the line enters a region of sandy clay which, continuing for some distance, finally gives place to the areas of the fertile oasis that surrounds Bokhara.

Kagan, the station for Bokhara, belongs to the first class. It is situated 1182 versts from Krasnovodsk, 565 versts from Tashkent, and ranks third among the stations of the Central Asian Railway, only yielding pride of place to Krasnovodsk and Askhabad. The station is erected upon ground specially granted by the Amir for the purpose, the Russian settlement of New Bokhara also being placed at this point. The native town of Bokhara, the capital of the Khanate and connected with the main station by a branch line, is 13 versts distant. It is the most important centre in the Khanate and maintains commercial relations with Moscow, Nijninogorod, Lodz, Siberia, India, Persia, and Afghanistan, the annual value of its business running into many millions of roubles.

There are several banks but only two of importance — the Russian Imperial Bank and the Russo-Chinese Bank. The residence of the Russian Political Agent is in New Bokhara and the Amir also has a palace there, constructed in hybrid Byzantine style.

The population of the Russian settlement, returned at 6000 inhabitants and drawn from various nationalities, includes the following European and Asiatic elements:

Russians	378	Hindoos	33
Poles	40	Afghans	24
Germans	24	Sarts	681
Greeks	8	Persians	252
Armenians.....	124	Kirghiz	92
Jews	345		

The remainder is made up of subjects of the Amir. The Russian quarter also contains 130 brick bungalows, a hospital with 20 beds, barracks for the 3rd and 4th companies of the Second Railway Battalion, numerous shops, and military go-downs.

The trade passing through Bokhara is very comprehensive. It embraces cotton, skins, wool, cotton prints, sugar, and a large importation of Russian manufactures. The bazaars of the native city show a very varied assortment of silken fabrics, copper-ware, silver-work, carpets, leather, and weapons, attracting traders from India and Persia, besides the Turkoman and Khivan districts.

The cultivated zone which lies around Bokhara and Kagan does not extend for any considerable distance beyond the immediate precincts of the capital of the Khanate. In running towards Merv the railway

passes through a region where the water difficulty is perpetual. The waterless zone may be said to begin with Murgak, where water from the Zerafshan River is supplied in tanks by the railway. This system is also adopted for the next station, Yakatut, which although insignificant receives a comparatively important volume of trade. Irrigation is not encouraged and the water coming by the railway is very carefully distributed to a population that, including the large village of Yakatut and a few smaller hamlets, amounts in all to 3000 souls.

Kara Kul follows as the line runs towards the south, and 10 versts distant from it there is the native town of the same name. At one time the centre of a large and flourishing oasis, the drifting sands from the Kara Kum have encroached until it has been ruined and the total population of the region reduced to 5000 people. The place is watered by the Zerafshan, upon whose volume so much of the prosperity of Bokhara depends. This river, which was called by the ancients the Polytimætus, takes its rise in the glaciers of the Kara Mountains, 270 miles east of Samarkand. Its upper reaches resemble a succession of cataracts and it is altogether too shallow for navigation. The average width is 210 feet; more than 100 canals, some of which are 140 feet broad, are supplied from this source of Bokhara's greatness. The capital of the Khanate is fed by one of them, called the Shari Rud, and over 35 feet in width. The river reaches its full volume during the winter and the spring. Three versts before Kara Kul, at a point where the

stream breaks up into a series of small feeders, a wide bridge, 15 sagues in length, affords passage to the railway.

In spite of diminishing importance Kara Kul still attracts and disperses a certain volume of trade, the bulk of which is associated with the cotton factory of M. Levine and a distillery controlled by a French syndicate, the two properties being situated close to the station.

Beyond Kara Kul, as far as Khoja Davlet, there is a considerable area of cultivation. With this station the agricultural possibilities of the quarter, due in the main to irrigation by the waters of the Oxus, come to an end and the line begins to pass through the shifting sands of Sundukli. From this point, too, the growth of the saxaoul is promoted as a protection to the railway from the sand drifts. At Farab station, where the growth and cultivation of sand shrubs has been studied, and where there is a special nursery covering five dessiatines, some little success in this direction has been attained. Unfortunately the moving sands are the great and ever-present menace to the prosperity of this neighbourhood. In contrast with these outlying edges of the district where there is nothing but a waste of salt marshes and sand dunes, there is a wonderful wealth of vegetation along the banks of the river. The station workshops, where some eighty workmen are daily employed, the small hospital, the railway buildings, and the technical school are embowered by trees of the most luxuriant growth. None the less Farab, although associated

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with the headquarters of the Oxus steamers, is too close to Charjui to be of much importance.

Charjui, opposite to Farab at the crossing of the Oxus, lies 1070 versts from Krasnovodsk and 677 versts from Tashkent. The town is situated in the midst of a fertile oasis lying along the banks of the Amu Daria. The Russian settlement is close to the station, but 16 versts away there is the native centre from which it derives its name. This border stronghold surmounts a hill to the south of the railway line, bearing in its rugged outline a faint resemblance to Edinburgh Castle. The settlement, nestling at its foot, contains the headquarters of the 17th Turkestan Rifle Battalion. The local force amounts to one battalion of Turkestan Rifles and one squadron of Cossacks. The Russian quarter, built upon ground presented by the Amir to the Russian Government, covers a wide area upon the left bank of the stream and extends along both sides of the railway. The point is of extreme interest, since it is here that the original bridge over the Amu Daria was constructed. The new work, a magnificent steel girder affair only lately opened, takes the place of the earlier wooden structure which, some 4600 yards in length, withstood the effects of climate and the stream for many years.

The trade and traffic of Charjui, one of the most active stations on the Central Asian system, is as follows:

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PASSENGERS

ARRIVALS		DEPARTURES	
37,331		36,796	
IMPORTS			
Military stores	280,399	poods	
Refined sugar	63,534		“
Sanded sugar	20,043		“
Yarn and thread	26,320		“
Kerosene	95,303		“
Timber	325,390		“
Manufactures	45,661		“
Iron	34,287		“
Spirits	13,709		“
Wine grapes	13,681		“
Green tea	21,373		“
Rice	48,876		“
Wheat flour	117,593		“
Goods, various	714,175		“
EXPORTS			
Raisins.....	10,985	poods	
Skins	12,321		“
Manufactured goods	8,499		“
Carpets	11,073		“
Sheepskins	18,508		“
Caracal	3,805		“
Cotton seed	85,825		“
Cotton	516,641		“
Wool	104,243		“
Goods, various	191,584		“

The combined population of the town comprises
7569:

RUSSIANS		NATIVES	
MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
2247	1254	2651	1417

The Russian quarter contains:

Houses	469	General hospital	1
Schools	3	Military hospitals	2
Clubs	2		

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In addition to this there is an extensive botanical nursery, similar to that which exists at Farab and devoted to the same purpose. Equally with Farab it serves as headquarters for the Amu Daria flotilla, which plies between Patta Hissar on the south and Petro Alexandrovsk and Khiva on the north. Traffic upon the river has increased in proportion to the development of trade along the Central Asian Railway, the steamer and general communication on the Amu Daria, taken in conjunction with the caravan routes between Charjui and the outlying parts of the Khanates of Bokhara and Khiva, combining to render it a point of supreme importance.

As soon as the Oxus and Charjui have been left behind, only two stations remain before the frontier of the Trans-Caspian Province is reached. One of these two places, Barkhani, a small station of the fifth class, serves, with Charjui and Farab, for the experimental production of desert shrubs. Between the Amu Daria and Barkhani the spreading vegetation, which changes the banks of the Amu Daria into verdant slopes, gives place to the Black Sands of Bokhara, the famous Kara Kum Desert. Six versts beyond the second place, Karaul Kuyu, the line crosses the Trans-Caspian frontier, proceeding through the heart of the Kara Kum. The first station in the desert is Repetek, where there are a small depot and workshops for a permanent staff of ten men. The water here, as well as for the next two stations, is brought from the Amu Daria at Charjui or from the Murghab at

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Merv, according to the direction in which the train may be travelling.

From Repetek the line enters the Merv district. Passing Pesski, Uch Adja, and Ravnina, the first and last of which belong to the fourth degree and the remaining one to the third degree of stations, the line runs into Annenkovo, named after the famous constructor of the Trans-Caspian Railway, General Annenkoff. The station itself lies in a hollow and 4 versts before the train reaches it there begins that wonderful growth which Nature herself has supplied to resist the encroachment of the Black Sands. It is here that the desert shrub saxaoul, with its long penetrating roots — the great stand-by of the Russians in their fight against the sand — is encountered in its native state. Although special nurseries have been established at many stations for the cultivation of this shrub, the railway authorities employ its roots for firewood, encouraging the Tekkes in the surrounding districts to bring it into the yards. As instances of the destruction with which this plant is assailed nearly 46,000 poods of saxaoul root are supplied annually to the railway authorities by the Tekkes at Ravnina, while 170,000 poods are brought to the authorities at Annenkovo by the Tekke gatherers in that part, the activities of these people creating a very serious prospect since the artificial cultivation of the shrub in the nurseries does not keep pace with its disappearance in the Veldt.

Beyond Annenkovo there is Kurban Kala. One verst further on this gives place to Bairam Ali, 108

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sagènes above sea-level. The station adjoins the gardens of the Murghab Imperial Estate which, founded in 1887 by Imperial enterprise, the Tsar having sanctioned the restoration of certain irrigation works, has assisted in securing a full measure of prosperity to these areas. Trim orchards and broad roads surround the station where huge piles of cotton may be seen awaiting transport, the evident prosperity of this smiling oasis affording striking contrast with the spectacle of Old Merv. Ruins, revealing a sombre vista of broken walls and shattered houses, the relics of a city which passed into decay in 1784, cover a space of forty square versts. It is the name of the chief of that city that is now perpetuated in the adjoining station, Bairam Ali. As the strong ruler of the countryside, he had held in check the robber tribes until he and his city were overthrown in their turn by Amir Murad, the founder of the Bokharan dynasty.

The country round Bairam Ali is level and the place draws its water from the Murghab River. Its commercial importance is progressing and, at present, there is a steady volume of trade passing through it.

The section of the railway from Tashkent now terminates at 905 versts from Tashkent and 842 versts from Krasnovodsk, after crossing the Tokhtamish arik by an eight-span iron girder bridge. This work rests upon iron piles, the length of the spans being 15 sagènes each. The commercial importance of Merv, in view of the rapid development of its trade

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with the Murghab Valley and the surrounding oases of Yulatan, Pendjeh, and Tejend, imparts to the town an economic significance little less than that which emanates from its strategic aspect.

The station of Merv, as the junction from which commences the Murghab branch line, is particularly well constructed. There is a depot with spacious repairing yards and very commodious workshops, where 250 workmen are daily employed. In addition there are extensive railway go-downs and quarters for the employees of the company. If these represent merely the requirements of the station, in a more general way there is a hospital with several beds, a building for the accommodation of emigrants and, in the immediate precincts of the station, barracks for the 2d Trans-Caspian Railway Battalion. Close to the station, which possesses special importance because of being the only spot in a length of 200 versts up and down the line where fresh water may be obtained, such water being derived from the Murghab River, an iron bridge carries the railway across the river. The spans of the bridge are 30 sagues and a paved carriage-way is laid upon either side of the metals. Beyond the bridge the road runs parallel with the Central Asian Railway until it reaches the Murghab River. Down the banks of this stream it branches off towards the Kushk and Murghab Valleys, holding solitary communion with the Murghab Valley Railway as far as the junction of the Pendjeh-Tanur Sangi extension with the line to Kushkinski Post.

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The appearance of Merv is monotonous. An absence of tropical foliage, the conventional character of the bungalows, and the broad, empty streets compose an exterior which is altogether desolate. The high temperature, which frequently exceeds 100 degrees, crushes initiative, and possibly it is due to the glare of the sun and the thick dust which rises in white clouds from the roads, that the thoroughfares are deserted between sunrise and sunset. The Murghab River divides the town into a commercial quarter, prominently situated upon the right bank 133 sages above sea-level, and a military settlement upon the opposite bank but connected by a pontoon bridge. Within the military quarter there are the barracks, and the general offices of the Administration, as well as a large garrison hospital and a military club. The civil section of the town contains a district hospital of fifteen beds and a casino, supported by the Government. The native bazaar is remote.

CHAPTER VII

THE NORTHERN BORDER

THE Amu Daria, the more modern rendering of the name of the classic Oxus, serves along the north and north-east of Afghanistan for a distance of 330 miles as the frontier between Afghan territory and the dominions of the Amir of Bokhara. Rising in the region of the Pamirs this river, which is among the most historical in Asia, falls into the Aral Sea after traversing more than 1400 miles. The area of its basin is estimated at 308,804 square kilometres, while for a space of 200 miles it flows through Bokharan territory, after which, for a further 200 miles, it acts as the frontier between the Syr Daria Province and the Khanate of Khiva.

Contributing to the volume of its upper waters are two principal streams, the Pamir and the Panja. The latter is the name by which the Upper Oxus is known. The word Panja, which is somewhat generic, is believed to refer to five streams existing in this region. It is related also to the names of the well-known Afghan forts of Kala Panja and Kala Bar Panja. It denotes the five fingers. It will be admitted that the existence of a sacred edifice erected over a stone bearing the imprint of the hand of

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Hazrat Ali, son-in-law of Mohammed, and situated in the vicinity of Kala Panja, is presumptive evidence of an affinity between the existence of the five streams and the shrine. Farther down the river, in Shignan, at Kala Bar Panja which means "The fort over the Panja," a fort has been constructed above a similar mark to that defining the position of Kala Panja. There is little doubt that some numerical quantity is expressed in the nomenclature.

In this wilderness, which in winter is a world of snow and ice, there is another river, the Ak-su, so that there are three streams, the Pamir, Panja, and the Ak-su. This trio drains the Pamirs, the Ak-su uniting with the Panja at Kala Wamar, the others at Langar Kisht. The Pamir and the Ak-su rise amid the Nicholas glaciers which drain into Lake Victoria and Lake Chakmaktin; and, while neither of these lakes can be identified positively as the sole source of the Oxus, nor the Pamir River be said to represent its origin, rivers, glaciers, and lakes are associated very closely with its head waters. The larger lake, known as Lake Victoria, and discovered in 1838 by Wood, is situated on the Pamir River; the smaller lake, Lake Chakmaktin, is on the Ak-su. The Pamir Daria flows through the Great Pamir. It possesses direct connection with the Oxus at Langar Kisht. The Ak-su flows through the Little Pamir. Lake Chakmaktin, lying on the Little Pamir, is situated 290 feet lower than Lake Victoria, which is 13,390 feet above sea-level. Panja, the third stream, rises in the congeries of glaciers which lie immediately

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below the Wakh-jir Pass — indisputably separate from the Nicholas glacier and without any connection with the two lakes. The five rivers which make up the waters of the Panja or Oxus are the Pamir, Panja, Ak-su or Murghab, Shakh, and Ghund. Many of these streams bear two, three, or even five names, this engaging variety of description springing from the fact that the several parts of the same stream are differently described by the various natives — Afghans, Chinese, Tajiks, and Kirghiz — who frequent the Pamir region. In some cases, too, explorers have added names derived from imperfect interpretation of local information, until it may be said that few rivers in the world bear so many names as does the Oxus in its higher reaches.

If we take the upper stream and follow it from its source in the glaciers which lie below the Wakh-jir Pass, it will be found that in its immediate descent from this field, but without taking its name from the adjacent pass, the waters of the Amu Daria in their higher reaches are styled the Panja. This title extends along the Upper Oxus until, at Bozai Gumbaz, it is joined by the first contribution from the Nicholas glaciers. This affluent is described indifferently by the name Burgutai, Little Pamir Daria, and Kuntai-su; a little before the meeting of the Burgutai with the Panja this stream divides east and west, the eastern arm passing into the channel of the Ak-su above Lake Chakmaktin so that the Burgutai stream feeds equally the Ak-su and Ab-i-Panja Rivers. The Burgutai is narrow, shallow, and

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inconstant; from its start to its junction with the Panja it possesses a course of only ten miles and is solely of interest as indicating one of the tributaries which go to swell the volume of the Oxus. Below Bozai Gumbaz the stream which rises in the Wakh-jir glaciers bears the five names Ab-i-Wakhan, Wakh-jir, Sarhad, Wakh-su, and Ab-i-Panja, the several variations of the name Panja.

The fall of the Panja from its source to its junction with the Sarhad has been estimated at 1247 metres in 75 kilometres. It will be gathered, accordingly, that it is a very rapid stream until it reaches the Sarhad. At Bozai Gumbaz and for a short distance along the Wakhan Valley, the river slackens until, turning northwards beyond Ishkashim, it recovers and tumbles swiftly forward. Before leaving the Wakhan Valley it receives, on the right bank, the stream which flows through Lake Victoria and is known incorrectly as Ab-i-Panja and correctly as Pamir Daria. At one time, in consequence of Wood's error, it was confounded with the head waters of the Oxus. Neither in volume, length, nor through the possession of any requisite characteristic can the Pamir Daria be accounted the parent stream. This river describes from its source in the glacial fields of Mount Nicholas a fall of 153 metres over the first 20 kilometres of its course. From Lake Victoria proper to Mazar-tepe, where the Khargosh River flows into it, the Pamir Daria falls 285 metres in 40 kilometres. From Mazar-tepe to Langar Kisht, where it unites with the waters of the Panja, Ab-i-

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Panja, or Ab-i-Wakhan, there is a further fall of 831 metres in 60 kilometres. From Langar Kisht to Rang the fall is 327 metres in 100 kilometres, the pace of the river in this stretch of the Wakhan Valley being comparatively sluggish. From Rang, which is a little east of Ishkashim, to Khorok in Shignan there is a perceptible increase in the current of the river, its mean fall being 702 metres in 100 kilometres.

The Panja in its passage through the Wakhan Valley presents a number of interesting contrasts. In its higher reaches at first a tumbling mountain torrent, it becomes between Semut, which is below Langar Kisht, and Shirtar a slow, lifeless stream, so nerveless and placid that it ceases to carry in its current the masses of suspended matter which hitherto have been swept along with it. At Langar Kisht, the junction of the Pamir Daria with the Panja, there is a deposit of broken rocks and smooth water-borne stones which have been brought down from the glaciers. The wide area, covered by these quantities of *débris* and detritus from the upper valleys, makes the banks and bed of the river resemble a deserted beach, where human life seldom enters and vegetation does not flourish. In places where deposits of sand have been left by the stream, the wind has whipped the loose surfaces into small dunes; in other directions large tracts of this drift sand have been covered by tamarisk; elsewhere there is no vegetation and the tamarisk has not appeared. In midsummer, when the river diminishes and high

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winds blow through the gorge, the scattered patches of sand left by the stream are caught up by the gales and swept in clouds of fine dust across the fields beyond.

In the wider valleys, such as those at Langar Kisht and the Zung, the Panja divides into a number of arms. These small channels contain dangerous quicksands. The stream itself is black with mud, the river at this point being charged with a fertilising matter which, where deposited, is followed usually by a growth of luxuriant vegetation. The Pamir Daria similarly breaks up, but its channels are free from quicksand and the water carries little mud in suspension.¹ Between Langar Kisht and Ptuk there is a belt of vegetation. The banks are covered with grass; there are many willows, white poplars, and here and there impenetrable copses of camelthorn. Beyond Ptuk the beneficent character of the river changes, and in the valley between Semut and Shirtar the banks reflect a waste of sand dunes and patches of drift sand. The mud deposits of the main stream, too, appear to be exhausted at Ptuk, where there is a large intake of glacial water from a number of rapid streams which come down from the Hindoo Kush. As if the moraines discharged their stones and gravel into these snow-fed torrents there exists at this point a stretch of river-bed, desolate and barren.

The mountains at Langar Kisht and Zung recede considerably on either side from the river and thus

¹ "Through the Unknown Pamirs." O. Olufsen.

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give room for a broad valley. But they come together immediately west of Kala Panja, forming a narrow ravine through which the Panja can just pass. Beyond this gorge the valley expands to a breadth of several kilometres and the river divides into arms dotted with little islands which are covered with thorny copses. After this lake-like extension the river, from the village of Shirtar down stream, consists of one channel which, here and there, widens out, making space for further inlets.

From Dersai to Nut the stream contracts to an average breadth of 25 metres and dashes with such suppressed energy between the steep banks of its rocky bed that the boom of the tumbling waters echoes throughout the valley. From Dersai to Si Khanah the mountains run so close together, north and south, that in most places there is only room for the actual bed of the river, and it is only near the mouths of the small hill-side streams that a few hundred square yards of arable soil may be found. About 3 kilometres west of Si Khanah there are a number of cataracts, and immediately south of Rang the sands, brought down by the stream, begin again to form into dunes. From Nut to Samchan, in the province of Ishkashim, the river valley becomes broader, the Panja dividing into several arms. The banks here are covered with thick copses, the haunt of the wild boar and the home of many birds; but in the province of Gharan, a few kilometres to the north of Samchan, the valley of the Panja becomes a mere cleft in the mountains, the river retaining this form

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until it receives the waters of the Ghund at Charog. At Darband, on the boundary between Gharan and Ishkashim and before the meeting of the Ghund Daria with the Panja, the stream breaking down a number of cataracts tears through its narrow mountain passage and becomes a most imposing waterfall; indeed, from Darband almost to Charog the stream of the Panja rushing along its rocky bed is one vast foaming cataract which, dashing against the mountains, crushes everything that falls into its whirling eddies.

The bulk of the tributary streams of the Panja River is found between Langar Kisht and Namagut, the presence of the Hindoo Kush glaciers being the source of an extensive water-supply draining into the river. The length of these streams seldom exceeds 15 kilometres and the more general course is one of 10 kilometres. Their period of greatest activity is at the time of the summer floods, when the ice melts and the heavy snows are broken up. At such a moment a large volume of water sweeps through their shallow channels carrying with it huge boulders, masses of ice, many tons of snow, and running with too great force to present facilities for fording. North from Ishkashim the tributaries of the Panja diminish both in number and size. The rivers flowing from the Badakshan Mountains and the streams from the southern valleys of the Pamirs are, save in one or two important instances, flood-water and dependent upon the break-up of the snows and ice. The most important exception is the Bartang, which

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is known as Murghab, Ak-tash, and Ak-su. This river is certainly the longest tributary of the Panja in Roshan district. In the course of its descent from Lake Chakmaktin it receives no less than eight tributaries, three of which approach it from the north — the remaining five rising in small, separate streams in the hilly ground to the south. The Bartang is not the only river of importance which unites with the Panja after the main stream has swung out from the Wakhan Valley towards the north. Two others, respectively the Ghund Daria and the Shakh Daria, join their waters at Sazan Bulak, flowing from that point under the name of Suchan Daria to a junction with the Panja. The waters of the Suchan Daria and the Panja meet at Charog, which lies on the right bank of the Panja somewhat south and east of Kala Bar Panja. This place, situated on the left bank, is the capital of Shignan.

Communications through Wakhan and Gharan still preserve their primitive character; but between Kala Panja and Kala Bar Panja, on the Afghan side of the river, there is a serviceable track which, if more a bridle path than suited for the requirements of wheeled traffic, is none the less superior to anything existing between these points on the Russian bank. The Russians have not troubled to make a clearance along the banks of the river, their principal objective having been to connect their military depots in the Pamirs with the principal fords of the Upper Oxus and to provide first-class communications between their Pamir posts and their bases in

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Turkestan. The Afghan line of communications on the banks of the river proceeds from the energy and precautions taken by Abdur Rahman. Although no longer preserved with the same care, it nevertheless offers to the Afghan patrols a convenient road by which the frontier may be inspected. At many points along this riverside paths have been cleared of boulders, streams have been bridged, and ramps have been constructed to facilitate the passage of the more troublesome spurs. Difficulties of movement must beset the traveller in Wakhan at all times, as progress through the valleys is dependent on the season. During the melting of the snows, which begins in May, the rivers which draw their waters from the mountain system of the Hindoo Kush or from the Pamirs are in flood, the period of flood-water prevailing until the end of August. From September to March it is usually possible to proceed along the banks; but, so soon as the snow begins to break up, the Panja, in its higher no less than in its middle reaches, becomes so swollen that the great volume of water passing through the channel breaks its bounds and inundates the valley. At such a time wide *détours* over the mountains have to be made; from the end of October the streams freeze and it becomes possible to use their frozen surfaces. Certain difficulties attend this practice, as the rapidity of the current interferes with the formation of the ice.

The passage through the river valleys, particularly in the higher reaches along the Russian border,

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is always arduous. It is better to secure permission to go round than to endure the labour of clambering up the many steep mountain slopes where there is no path to guide one and very little foothold. It is practically useless to take animal transport, and coolies lightly laden are more reliable a means of effecting the journey. Beyond Ishkashim, as far as the junction of the Suchan Daria with the Panja, a distance of 50 miles, the river valley is so broken and complex that the road, where it exists at all, becomes a mere zigzag, half-a-dozen inches in breadth. Rugged and lofty, it is barely perceptible on the granite face of the mountain. Frequently, no better footing than the surface roughness of the rocks presents itself, Nature appearing to have gone out of her way in order to raise obstacles against the passing of the wayfarer.

At the junction of the Suchan Daria with the Panja, where the valley widens, there is no longer confusion about the name of the stream. It is now the Panja or Ab-i-Panja, and until meeting with the Bartang-Murghab-Ak-su-Ak-tash at Kala Wamar the valley preserves its open character. Beyond the Bartang its dimensions contract once more and the river tears a way for itself through mountain gorges. At Kala Khum it bends to the west and, striking a little south and then a little north-west, runs at right angles to the general trend of the mountains towards the more open valleys about Kulab. Kala Khum may be said to mark the most northerly point of the river. The district surrounding it is in

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distinct contrast with the desolation of the valleys along the Upper Oxus. The cliffs are no less bold and the precipices no less sheer than in Gharan and Wakhan; but owing to the mildness of the climate of Darwaz a genial warmth permeates the region, encouraging a generous growth of vegetation. The wild vine, the red pomegranate, the apple, pear, and mulberry flourish and many varieties of vegetables are freely cultivated.

From the point where the Bokharan province of Kulab becomes separated by the Oxus River from the Afghan districts of Rustak and Kataghan, the channel of the stream is contained no longer by the walls of the mountains. Broad streams, from the Trans-Alai Range in one direction and the highlands of Karategin in another, join the Oxus, the main river at once beginning to adopt an uncertain channel. Numerous feeders appear on both banks at this part of its course. The Kulab and Surkhab-Waksh-Kizil-su join it in broad muddy streams from the Karategin uplands, until the river, changing its character altogether, divides itself into many channels where the hills fail to confine it. In addition to the two tributaries just mentioned as appearing on the right bank, there are three others, the Kafir-nahan, the Surkhan, and the Darban. These are contributed from Bokhara; while, on the left bank, Badakshan dismisses the Kokcha and the Kunduz-Ghori-Khanabad-Aksarai to a meeting with the main stream. In earlier times, when there were fewer settlements and the demand for purposes of irriga-

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tion was not so great, the Amu Daria possessed, both on the north and on the south, other tributaries, the waters of which are now entirely diverted to the fields. In these middle as also in the upper reaches of the river but little of the main stream is utilised by villagers, the inhabitants of the settlements in the valleys threaded by the Oxus supplying their agricultural necessities from the smaller streams. West of Kunduz, for a distance of nearly 700 miles, the drainage of the hills to the south of the river is lost in the plains of Afghan Turkestan; but on the Bokharan side the extensive canalisation, which is such a prominent feature, causes many of the streams to be exhausted before they have had opportunity to effect a junction with the Amu Daria. It is not until near Pitniak that any important diversion of the waters of the Oxus for cultivation is made. At that point the great division of the stream for the requirements of the Khivan oasis occurs, a general discharge of 125,000 cubic feet per second being deflected in order to supply a system of canals by which over 4000 square miles of fertile alluvial land are kept in tillage.

The bed of the Oxus in its lower reaches is muddy. Taking the course of the river as a whole, measurements which have been made at a series of points demonstrate that there are no less than 16,000,000 tons of sedimentary matter constantly passing down to form the vast delta that distinguishes its mouth, as well as to fertilise its banks or any areas which, from time to time, may be submerged. It is unnecessary

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to mention all the various channels through which, below the fortress of Nukus, the stream flows. The principal are the Ulkan Daria, the Taldik, and the Yani Su. These present the usual features of a delta; but the triangular space contained within the Yani Su and the Taldik, its extreme eastern and western channels, is not a true delta, since it consists of an original formation through which the river has cut its way to the Aral Sea, and upon which other matter has been deposited. Actual deltas, however, have been developed about the mouths of the Taldik and Yani Su, their existence constituting a bar to vessels drawing over four feet of water.

The tendency of the Oxus, like that of the great Siberian rivers, is to press continually on its right or east bank. The consequence of this deflection, which is due to the rotation of the earth round its axis from west to east, is that the stream has turned from the Kungrad channel eastwards to the Taldik channel and thence to the Yani Su which, at present, is receiving the main discharge. In former times a far greater deviation took place. No less than twice during its history has the Oxus oscillated between the Caspian and the Aral Seas. In the time of Strabo it was a sort of eastern continuation of the Kura route from Georgia across the Caspian and the Kara Kum to Charjui. Its course across the desert is indicated by the Igdy and other wells dotted over the plains in a line with its former bed, which reached the Caspian in the depression between the Great and Little Balkan Hills. Later on Edrisi found the

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Oxus flowing into the Aral. But in the fourteenth century it was flowing into the Caspian — this time along the Uzboi channel. The bed ran from near Nukus westwards to the Sara Kamish steppe and thence southwards to the Igdy wells, along the original course between the Balkans to the Caspian, close to Mikhailovsk.

The navigation of the Oxus has been the subject of constant inquiry from the time when, in 1875, the steamer *Petrovski*, drawing three and a half feet of water, picked a passage for itself as far as Nukus. Three years later another steamer, the *Samarkand*, with a draught of three feet and of twenty-four horsepower, made the journey from Petro Alexandrovsk to Kelif. Between 1878 and 1880 further attempts were made to demonstrate the navigability of this water-way; but between 1880 and 1887 there was so much conflict of opinion that matters scarcely advanced beyond the experimental stage. At that date the increasing importance of the interests of Russia along the Afghan border made evident the advisability of improving all possible lines of communication with it. With this end in view, the Russian Government equipped a small fleet of steamers for river service and the navigation of the Oxus to-day is controlled by these vessels, which are described as the Government Amu Daria Flotilla. Between Patta Hissar on the middle reaches and Khiva, Petro Alexandrovsk, and Kungrad on the lower reaches, these craft conduct a regular shipping business, Farab and Charjui acting as the central

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depot to the service — Farab holding the headquarters of the company and Charjui being the principal anchorage.

From Patta Hissar to Charjui the journey occupies between seven and ten days, dependent upon the size of the steamer and the character of the voyage. Sand banks are a perpetual menace to rapid navigation, and the length of time varies according to the immunity of the undertaking from mishap. From Charjui to Kungrad the same amount of time is usually required.

The boats are of old construction and only number five in all. They are supplemented by a fleet of barges of large and small capacity, the larger class carrying 12,000 poods, the smaller, of which there are two divisions, carrying 5000 poods and 3000 poods each.

The two principal steamers, respectively the *Tsar* and *Tsaritsa*, were the first to be launched and date back to 1887. The three others, which are slower, smaller, and more akin to river tugs than passenger craft, are the *Samarkand*, *Bokhara*, and *Kabul*. Their cost was borne by the Government and ran into several thousand pounds apiece. All the vessels are paddle-boats and flat-bottomed. The two larger ships are supposed to be able to make 16 knots per hour; their length is 150 feet, with 23 feet beam, and engines of 500 horse-power.

Their draught, when laden, is rather less than 3 feet, while they carry a crew of 30 hands and possess accommodation for 300 men and 20 officers.

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They take any class of cargo and passengers and are also utilised for towing the freight barges of the military authorities up stream to the frontier stations at Karki, Kelif, Patta Hissar, and Termes. Navigation between Patta Hissar and Charjui continues throughout the year unless prevented by the freezing of the river; between Charjui and Kungrad the continuity of the down-river service is dependent upon the sand banks, their sudden appearance and constant change of position quite upsetting the ordinary schedule.

From April 1 to October 1 the steamers leave Charjui twice a week — on Wednesdays for Karki and on Sundays for Patta Hissar. During the remainder of the year they leave once a week, on Sundays, for Patta Hissar. On the journey from Patta Hissar to Karki, during the summer, steamers leave on Saturdays and in the winter months on Thursdays; for the journey from Karki to Patta Hissar steamers leave in the summer months on Wednesdays and in the winter months on Fridays. From Patta Hissar to Charjui steamers run every Friday and Sunday in summer and during the winter on Sundays.

In general, navigation on the lower Oxus is difficult. Above Charjui the swiftness of the current, which averages five miles and, in some places, even six miles an hour, impedes the up-stream progress of any but the more powerful boats. Unfortunately the narrowness of the channel above Charjui and its extreme tortuousness make the employment of

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steamers of a class that would be really serviceable against so strong a current quite unsuitable. Again, the constant shifting of the proper channel in the lower reaches, the liability of the river to sudden rises between April and August and the irregular falls between August and October — sometimes making within a few hours a difference of eight feet in the level of the stream — create a further obstacle against the successful organisation of a purely commercial service. The difficulty is much greater down stream where obstructions to navigation, owing to the diminution of the current as the surface of the stream increases, are more frequent.

In this respect it is interesting to study the fall of the river from Kelif to Charjui, and from that point to the mouth. According to the Russian reckoning, between these two points, a distance of 200 miles, there is a fall of 220 feet.¹

From Charjui to the mouth of the river there is a fall of only 167 feet in a distance of 500 miles. If the fall in the river between Patta Hissar and Charjui be compared with the width of the stream, the difficulty presented to navigation through the current will be understood. There is a breadth at Kelif of 540 yards which increases to 650 yards at Charjui during the normal flow of the river; but for a considerable distance from the bank the stream is shallow, possessing a bare depth of 3 feet with an average of 10 feet in the centre. At the time of flood these dimensions become greatly increased and

¹ "Russian Central Asia." H. Lansdell.

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the Oxus from Farab to its mouth is an imposing spectacle. In places it is fully a mile in width and a very general measurement is 1000 metres. The flood channel is usually three-fourths wider than the ordinary stream; in the extremely broad places the average strength of the current per hour is 4 miles, falling as low as $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles per hour when the flood has subsided. The water passing down is in the desert stretches of a yellow hue. In those portions where rocks take the place of sand it shows a grey tone, imparted by the masses of granite, sand, and mica which are held in suspension. In spite of its curious colouring the water is used extensively for drinking purposes without apparent ill effect. In taste it is slightly saline, but it does not possess a sufficient quantity of salt to prevent freezing. The temperature of the river in midsummer is 73° . In winter the stream above Kunduz freezes regularly, the frozen surface becoming a passageway between the banks. Below Khiva a similar physical condition prevails, caravans crossing the ice without risk. At Charjui the river freezes over from bank to bank, but it is only at rare seasons that the ice is of sufficient solidarity to support general traffic. At Karki the surface of the river coats over, but the ice itself is unsubstantial; at Kelif, where numerous floes appear in the stream, the force of the current is sufficient to prevent any general formation of ice.

The banks of the river about Kelif, for a distance of fifty miles above the ferry and particularly on the right bank, reveal considerable agricultural activity.

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Further along the left bank of the lower Oxus there is a zone, five miles in width, in which cultivation has been extensively practised. Wheat and barley, the spreading willow, and the luscious mulberry-tree grow in profusion, imparting to the scene an appearance of prosperity in odd contrast with the dreary expanses distinguishing so much of the country through which the river courses. Irrigation is widely employed; water is drawn from the Oxus in long canals, the heads of which are constantly being destroyed by flood and renewed again as rapidly. The scene in these attenuated strips of cultivation is bright and there is a happy note of industry and peace. Small villages, the houses neatly built of stone, stand scattered about the landscape; single, substantial, and very comfortable-looking homesteads are numerous. Where cultivation ceases, too, there is usually a narrow tract of jungle between the reeds of the river-bed and the edge of the desert, where admirable cover exists for wild animals and birds.

The passage of the stream by the steamers of the Oxus flotilla is made only during daylight. From Charjui, where there are excellent facilities, the hour of departure is eight o'clock. If overtaken by darkness between the stages the vessels tie up to the bank, resuming the journey at dawn. In calm weather an average daily passage is fifty miles, although down stream a better run is generally recorded. In the event of arriving in advance of the scheduled time, the hour of departure is left to the discretion

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of the captain. Regular halts are arranged at Patta Hissar, where the steamers stay four hours, and at Karki where, on the voyage to Patta Hissar, four hours are also spent. This interval is reduced to two hours on the return journey and also at Charjui; but elsewhere it is a matter of uncertainty, the duration of the stop merely being governed by the time occupied in loading and unloading the barges. Steamers, as a rule, start punctually, particularly at Charjui, the vessels leaving their moorings according to Askhabad time. This is the standard on the Central Asian Railway.

The custom of granting passages at reduced rates to all and sundry associated with the Government, observed throughout the railway systems of Russia, is adopted on the steamers of the Oxus flotilla. There are three classes of tariffs and two standards of accommodation:

- (1) Officers and doctors travelling on duty.
- (2) Children between the ages of five and ten years.
- (3) Non-commissioned officers, soldiers, emigrants with families, and prisoners.

These are all carried at a reduction of fifty per cent. Soldiers are compelled to show a warrant attested by the authority for the transport of troops by water, emigrants a permit signed by the local civil authority, and the guard in charge of prisoners an order from the local police bureau before being supplied with tickets. All passengers are entitled to one pood of baggage, free of charge; but for the

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unloading and reloading of baggage or of cargo, passengers must pay at the rate of one and a half kopecks per pood; for the hire of boats for the transportation of such baggage to the steamer or from the steamer to the shore at the rate of one kopeck per pood. Animals of a domestic description, such as sheep, camels, horses, cattle, and dogs, bales of merchandise, and timber are carried by special arrangement and under a special tariff. This can be supplied on demand at the chief bureau of the flotilla at Charjui and Farab, at the principal goods office of the company at Karki, by the captains of steamers and the mates of barges. Steamers are permitted to tow private vessels of any description at the rate of half a kopeck per ton of their displacement in addition to whatever other charges may be contracted.

The accommodation is divided between the first and third classes, the cabins being at the disposal of the first-class passengers. Restrictions are not placed on the movements of native passengers who, if they dared to pay for a cabin, would be permitted to berth in the first saloon. Meals are supplied on board by arrangement with the purser; but, while there is no material difficulty attaching to the journey up and down the river, permission to travel by these steamers is very rarely accorded to foreigners.

For the better comprehension of the terms which have been mentioned the following table is given:

1 ton	= 62 poods
1 pood	= 36 lbs.
1 rouble	= 2 shillings
100 kopecks	= 1 rouble

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In addition to the steamers of the flotilla there are 380 native-owned craft engaged in trading along the lower and middle reaches of the stream. These vessels conduct a very flourishing trade in various native commodities — fruit, vegetables, wood, live stock, cotton goods, and such minor manufactures as may be required among the native villages. The boats used in this traffic are of rough native workmanship, capacious and damp, but in their way serviceable enough.

Their dimensions are:

LENGTH	BEAM	DEPTH
50 feet	18 feet	4 feet

Each boat can accommodate 150 passengers, 20 mounted men, and stow 20 tons of cargo — an estimate which strains their capacity to its utmost limit. In design these craft, flat-bottomed, with a draught of 18 inches and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet of gunwale above the water, are constructed of square logs of willow or mulberry, 6 feet in length, peeled, clipped into shape, and clamped together with iron pins. The craft trade principally on the lower reaches of the river, although there is nothing to prevent them, save the difficulty of the task, from venturing further up stream. In this respect a few of the better class do manage to reach Patta Hissar, whence large floats of timber are despatched to Charjui. The existence of this trade at Patta Hissar is characteristic of the middle reaches of the stream, where white poplar, willows, and mulberry trees grow in profusion. The presence of the timber encourages

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native shipping to tie up to the trees, the several little colonies of vessels thus laid up imparting to the appearance of the river an amount of life and animation not always borne out by actual traffic.

The contrivances used by ferries on the Oxus are in a measure identical with those which may be noticed on the Murghab and along the Helmund. Neither rafts nor inflated skins are in any favour on the lower reaches, although skins are employed by natives in the region of the Upper Oxus, this method constituting the sole means by which a passage of the river is effected. On the middle and lower reaches there are rough boats, similar in design to the trading craft but somewhat smaller in dimension. Rafts are requisitioned only for the transportation of firewood.

Above Charjui, as far as a little east of the mouth of the Kunduz River, a distance of nearly 300 miles, there are fifteen ferries, four of which have been abandoned. Below Charjui, from that point as far as Petro Alexandrovsk, there are nine.

These ferries are provided with two boats, stationed one on either side of the river. The passage is accomplished by punting or through the services of small horses trained to tow the boat while swimming and attached by means of a surcingle to an outrigger which projects beyond the gunwale. Native shipping relies principally on man-haulage up stream, supplemented by constant poling; down stream the boats drift with the current.

It is characteristic of a large portion of the river

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that the stream flows within double banks. The inner one is the line of the water at ordinary seasons, while the outer one is the limit of the river in flood. The distance between the banks is as much as two miles in many places and the zone thus formed is laid out in fields and gardens. Moreover, it rarely happens that this interior space is altogether inundated and a portion, therefore, is cultivated permanently. Elsewhere the area available for development is measured by the flood season. Where these intra-spaces occur considerable length is added to the ferry passage. Sometimes the river forms a series of separate channels until its waters have united beyond the interruption. Such a point is met with at Khwaja Sala, where in certain seasons the stream is divided into three branches, the width of each channel being 295 yards, 113 yards, and 415 yards. The average depth there is 9 feet. At Kelif, 33 miles up stream, on the other hand, these double banks do not appear, the river flowing in a single and very narrow bed. The Kelif ferry is of interest as a link in the affairs of Central Asia. It was the point where Alexander crossed the Oxus in B.C. 330; while to-day it is one of the most important Customs stations on the Russo-Afghan border. At every ferry station small posts of observation, formed of Bokharan levies, have been established. During the prevalence of plague in India and cholera in Afghanistan and Persia orders were issued which closed all ferries against the passage of caravans and travellers. Only at Charjui and Karki was traffic

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permitted. Lately there has been some relaxation in the execution of these regulations; but a number of the minor ferries are still barred against any description of communication from Afghanistan, India, and Persia.

The river does not continue for many miles in the turbulent spirit that distinguishes its appearance at Kelif; at Karki, a few miles to the west, on account of a second channel there is greater width. At Charjui the ferry is nearly 700 yards across at low water, with several branches formed by sand banks. At the time of flood this distance becomes double with a depth of 30 feet in mid-stream; the further dimensions of the river down stream corresponding in proportion with the level of the banks.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MURGHAB VALLEY RAILWAY

THE Russian Government has shown remarkable energy during the past few years in improving its railway communications in Central Asian regions. After the Trans-Caspian line had been finished from the Caspian Sea to Samarkand there was a lull in construction, but presently an extension was carried on to Tashkent and thence to Andijan. By creating railway communication with Merv, Russia met half-way the difficulties of her station in Trans-Caspia. In the event of any military crisis arising with Afghanistan, 300 versts of difficult country yet remained to be crossed before concentration upon that frontier could be effected. At a later date a branch was run from Merv to Pendjeh, by which this hiatus was at once repaired and Russia secured to herself a position of commanding importance across the road to Herat.

Surveys, carried out in the year 1894 in two directions, from the station of Tejend and from Merv, demonstrated that the Merv-Murghab route did not present any technical difficulties. Shorter than the Tejend line by 65 versts and more level, it traversed the well-populated Merv, Yulatan, and Pendjeh

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oases. Water was also plentiful. On the other hand the line from Tejend crossed very difficult country; while it doubled the distance, necessitating 700,000 cubic sages additional excavation. Perhaps a more emphatic objection arose from the inadequacy of water between Tejend and Sarakhs, supplies in the Tejend district drying up between September and January. As a consequence the line was constructed from Merv to Kushkinski Post, on the Afghan frontier, through the valleys of the Murghab and Kushk Rivers, just over 293 versts or 192 miles in length, with a terminal depot only 80 miles distant from Herat. From motives of economy one station was allowed to every 50 versts, with sidings half-way between them; only two engine sheds and workshops were provided, while all other buildings were limited and none but the cheapest materials employed. Bridges were made of wood instead of stone, the rolling-stock sufficing for four trains in the twenty-four hours. Railway and military telegraph wires were fixed to the same posts and it was not intended to ballast the permanent way. Construction was reduced by these precautions to 8,408,000 roubles. After revision by a commission of the General Staff this sum was increased by the cost of ballasting the permanent way, 329,000 roubles; the total expenditure upon the work finally amounting to 9,669,000 roubles or 33,000 roubles per verst.

Imperial ukase authorised construction on August 26, 1896, actual work beginning on April 27, 1897.

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Colonel Ulyanin, of the Corps of Engineers, was appointed Chief Constructor and the overseers were also engineer officers, the majority of whom had already taken part in the laying of the Krasnovodsk-Merv section of the Trans-Caspian Railway. The workmen consisted of Russians, Persians, Bokharans, Sarts from the province of Samarkand, Ersaris and Afghans from Maimana, the daily roll averaging between 3500 and 5000. Of this number from 27 per cent. to 45 per cent. were Russians, who were paid from 89 kopecks to 1 rouble 80 kopecks per day. Native workmen received no more than 80 kopecks daily; several hundred of them worked for a monthly salary of between 15 and 17 roubles. The prevalence of malaria in the Kushk and Murghab Valleys interrupted the building and hundreds of instances of labourers breaking their contracts occurred, the authorities being obliged to repair the shortage by enlisting inexperienced men. In spite of this difficulty work upon the permanent way was completed in November, 1898, and the task of laying the rails, which began on November 15, 1897, was finished on December 4, 1898. Rails were laid at a rate varying between one and two and one-half versts per day, the job being carried out by the newly formed companies of the Railway Battalion. The cost per verst fluctuated from 350 to 450 roubles. The difference existing between the gauge of this railway and the standard of the Russian railways has since been altered. At first the line was of narrow gauge with rails weighing 18 pounds to the cubic foot,

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metals of a heavier type only being laid for a distance of 40 versts. The service of trains from Merv to Kushkinski was opened on December 4, 1898. At the present time it comprises four daily local trains and two bi-weekly expresses, "through" trains, which complete the journey in eighteen hours at a speed of eleven miles an hour.

Upon completion and after inspection by a commission, control of the Murghab Valley line reverted to the Minister of Ways and Communications by whom the original narrow gauge was adapted to the broad gauge of the Russian system. Various other alterations and improvements in the siding and hutting accommodation were also carried out. In 1901-1902 branch lines to Chahil Dukteran and Tanur Sangi, skirting the left bank of the Murghab and passing Maruchak on the Afghan bank, were constructed. It is now proposed to double the entire track between Merv and Kushkinski Post, these highly significant changes making the railway available for any service the military authorities might impose upon it. The line itself is veiled in such close secrecy by the Russian authorities that peculiar interest attaches to any particulars upon it, and these notes, presented for the first time to the public, convey an accurate and not unimportant description of its character, from the junction at Merv to the terminus at Chahil Dukteran.

From Merv station, 118.01 sagenes above sea-level, the railway runs at first in a south-easterly direction, passing due south and south-west along

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the valleys of the Murghab and Kushk Rivers. The first station beyond Merv is Talkhatan Baba, some 37 versts distant at an elevation of 127.06 sagenes. This place is situated in country which is both sandy and flat, while barely 6 versts away is the Murghab River, upon which the station is dependent for its water-supply. Twenty versts farther the line meets the spreading prosperity of the Yulatan oasis, from which the point derives its name. Yulatan station stands at a height of 134.16 sagenes; and, although a pleasant freshness is imparted by the oasis to its environment, the general spectacle is very dreary, being broken only by the contours of low dunes and undulating sand ridges. A small village has been founded by the Russians on the banks of the stream, the first colonists to establish themselves in Yulatan appearing in 1885. An open square, surrounded by little brick and stone buildings, distinguishes the centre of the settlement. Four wide streets, along the gutters of which are planted tall trees, radiate from it; while the population consists principally of Persians, Khivans, Sarts, Armenians, and Bokharan Jews. The percentage of Russians is inconsiderable.

Yulatan contains the headquarters of the District Commissioner, the Sixth Company of the 1st Trans-Caspian Railway Battalion, and two companies of the 1st Caucasian Rifle Battalion. There are also a post and telegraph office, a mixed primary school, a hospital with six beds, a synagogue, and a large public garden. The trade is in the hands of Bokharan Jews and the market assembles upon Mondays and Thurs-

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days. In the district around the station there is a Tekke population of 15,000, occupied, for the most part, in the cotton industry. By reason of its trade this station is the most important commercial centre on the line, the bulk of the trade from the Yulatan oasis line now converging upon this point.

The third station from Merv is Sultan-i-band, some 76 versts distant and at an altitude of 139.55 sageses. A slight change in the character of the country is here noticeable; the flat, sandy, barren expanse which begins wherever the Yulatan oasis leaves off giving place to dense reeds and marshes. Water is not drawn from the Murghab River at this station, the supply coming from the Khani Yab Canal. Originally the region was fertilised by the Sultan-i-band; but that once magnificent work has fallen into decay, and, although the surrounding country contains a large Tekke population, there is very little industry. The ruins of the Sultan-i-band lie in the immediate vicinity — the word “band” means “dam” — this famous canal once being connected very closely with the history of Old Merv when the waters of the Murghab irrigated that oasis. But to-day the commercial importance of the district is insignificant and in the year under review only 3689 poods of cotton were forwarded to Merv.

The environment of the next station, Imam Baba, which is 44 versts distant, reveals on account of the prevalence of malaria a very desolate appearance. It is situated where the sand-hills approach the banks of the Murghab River, but the spot is

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desert and marshy. It rests 148.60 sagues above the sea, drawing its water from the Murghab River. There is little local industry and the district, owing to the fever, is very scantily populated.

The fifth station from Merv is Sari Yazı, where a small buffet denotes its importance. The mean gradient of the line between Merv and this point is 0.0005 and the distance is 157 versts. The depot is situated in the Murghab Valley, bounded on the east by the Karabyl Hills, a low-lying ridge of sandy clay. It lies 155.57 sagues high and depends for its water upon the Murghab River. Sari Yazı occupies an interesting region and is itself the site of an important Turkoman fortress, now in ruins. Among the valleys on the northern slopes of the Karabyl Hills there are the traces of numerous Tekke villages, whose men held the region in subjection while the women cultivated the ground. At the station there are railway yards and workshops; attached to it is a hospital with fifteen beds and barracks for one company of the Railway Battalion.

Tash Kepri, the sixth station from Merv and 197 versts from that place, is situated in the broad valley of the Murghab River at its confluence with the Kushk River. It is at a height of 164.0 sagues and the water-supply is from the Murghab River. The place derives its name from a handsome old brick bridge of nine arches, which spans the Kushk River at a distance of three-quarters of a mile to the south-west of Ak Tepe and connects the station with the village. It is also described as Pul-i-Khisti. The

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Karabyl Hills, which bound the valley of the Murghab on the east, here recede somewhat from the river and there is a vestige of cultivation, the green plots imparting a welcome note of relief to the general aspect of the scene. Close to the station is a monument to the soldiers who fell during the expedition of 1885, which was commanded by Lieutenant-General Komaroff. Among the trophies of the fight were eight guns and the whole of the Afghan camp. The monument was erected at the instance of the late Commander of the Forces in the Trans-Caspian Province, Lieutenant-General Kuropatkin, by those who took part in the fight together with the troops in garrison in the district. The commercial development of the Tash Kepri district is growing and, conformably with the increase of trade with Afghanistan, the station itself is becoming of greater importance.

Almost upon the frontier and connected with it by a carriage-road 22 versts in length, is Takhta Bazaar, the headquarters of the Harzagi section of the Pendjeh Sariks who control the Kashan Valley cultivation. It is situated on the Murghab River and is the only settlement of importance in the Pendjeh district. The population comprises Jews, Persians, Bokharans, Armenians, Khivans, Russians, Afghans, and Tartars. There are, including a native school under Russian supervision, 57 buildings in the village, of which at least one-half belong to the Jews. The Pendjeh Custom House, a frontier establishment of the third class through which passes the trade with Afghanistan, is situated near it.

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From Pendjeh the main line, taking a south-westerly direction, runs through the narrow valley of the Kushk River to Kushkinski Post. Since the completion of this work a branch line has been carried through from Tash Kepri a distance of 22 versts along the Murghab to Tanur Sangi, affording a supplementary avenue of approach for the purposes of concentration and the transport of stores to points on the actual Russo-Afghan frontier. From this extension a further line, 25 versts in length, has been projected towards Torashekh from a little south-east of Pendjeh up the Kashan Valley. Ten miles south-east of Tanur Sangi, at Bala Murghab, and 30 miles south of Torashekh, at Kala Nao, the Afghans possess strong frontier posts. Herat already lay so snugly in the grasp of Russia that it might have been spared this little further attention.

Kala-i-Mor, the station before Kushkinski Post, is situated almost mid-way between Pendjeh and the terminus at Kushk. It is 244 versts from Merv and 202 sagenes above sea-level. The position of the station, bounded by hills where wild boars are plentiful and snipe and pheasants offer attractive sport, occupies a dreary and desolate scene. There is little vegetation and considerable malaria; the local springs are quite brackish as the result of extensive deposits of salt in the sand. Fresh water is brought by train to the station where a drinking-water reservoir has been established. No trade exists at Kala-i-Mor, which fails to attract a population.

Beyond Kala-i-Mor, at a distance of 259 versts

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from Merv, the line crosses the Kushk River by a bridge with stone abutments supported upon iron piles. Half-way to Kushkinski Post station, near the railway siding, are the ruins of the small fortress of Chemen-i-Bed. While approaching it the line passes the Alexeieffski village, established by Russian colonists in 1892 and containing forty-one families. This village and the neighbouring one of Poltavski, founded in 1896 and where there are thirty-five families, are the most southern settlements within the Russian Empire. The inhabitants exist almost entirely by the exportation of considerable quantities of wheat, hay, and straw to Kushkinski Post for the purposes of the garrison.

Kushkinski Post station, 306.4 sagenes above sea-level, is 293 versts from Merv. It possesses a fine buffet. The military post, situated near the frontier in the broad valley of the Kushk River, is bounded by the undulating slopes of the Bend Chengurek chain, an offshoot of the Paropamisus. With the completion of the Murghab Railway, Kushkinski Post immediately attained special importance, and in 1900 it was declared a fortress of the fourth rank. The hoisting of the Imperial standard over the walls was carried out in the presence of the late Minister of War, General Kuropatkin. In the early days, before the lines of the fortress had been planned, Kushkinski Post comprised a number of detached works within which the various arms were quartered. At that time, too, the officers' accommodation, consisting of one-storey buildings roughly constructed

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out of mud, was in the railway settlement where, pending the completion of the main works, long narrow sheds for the use of the troops had been erected. Now improvement has followed upon preliminary chaos and the men are comfortably housed in cool barracks upon the upper slopes of the adjacent heights. The officers are disposed, with equal care and convenience, elsewhere. Public buildings likewise have improved upon their original sites. The military hospital, the post and telegraph bureau, and the Custom House have taken up locations upon high ground, their positions crowned, if not protected, by forts upon the crest of these very useful eminences. Kushkinski Post, therefore, may be said to be a thriving settlement where, if the hours are wearisome and the days charged with *ennui*, there is always the prospect of a "dust up."

Attempts have been made from time to time, by officers stationed at Kushkinski Post, to become familiar with the officers in command of the Afghan posts across the frontier. More often these attempts at friendliness have been rebuffed, the Afghan soldiery neither accepting advances from the Russians nor making any overtures themselves. Strained relations exist, as a rule, between military posts on either side of any frontier, although, in regard to the Russo-Afghan frontier, there was an occasion when friendly conditions prevailed between the Russians and the Afghans. At that time the staff of the frontier regiment on guard along the Afghan side of the border had accepted an invitation to mess at

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the Russian post. They arrived in due course — appearing in all the full-dress grandeur of second-hand railway uniforms! The officer commanding the detachment exhibited on the collar of his tunic the mystic words “Ticket Collector”; his subordinate, a subaltern, was content with the less exalted label of “Guard.” Out of courtesy to their guests the Russians suppressed their merriment, receiving nevertheless the impression that a portion of the subsidy, granted by the Government of India to the Amir of Afghanistan, was taken out in the cast-off uniforms of British public companies. The facts were that the Amir, through his agent in India, had acquired a large parcel of discarded clothing at one of the annual sales of condemned stores in Northern India.

This exchange of courtesies on the frontier illustrates only the pleasant side of service in this region. More serious incidents occur. Occasionally in the heat of the chase, when parties of Russian officers have crossed the frontier in pursuit of their quarry, they have been fired upon by the Afghan patrols or ridden down by Afghan sowars. Sporting trips around Kushkinski Post or in the valleys of the Murghab are infrequent among the Russians, although wild boar abound in the thick patches of reeds which hem in the banks of the rivers; the tufts of grass, the hardy scrub, and the patches of bush also afford excellent cover for partridges and pheasants. The scarcity of good water at any distance from the railway is the great drawback to such excursions, since

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the transport of water is both costly and cumbersome. In cantonments goat-skins of the precious fluid are brought for sale by water-sellers who come round, earning a precarious livelihood by their industry.

This custom, which prevails throughout the East, was once turned to account by an Afghan who was afterwards discovered to be an Hazara sapper from the Kabul garrison. Disguised as a water-seller, he spent three weeks at Kushkinski Post conducting an exhaustive inspection of the works and coming every night and morning to the fort with his supplies of water. Chance, which in Asia plays no less a part in the affairs of man than in Europe, threw across his path a native who had visited Kabul some weeks before with letters from the Governor-General of Turkestan. The Afghan had been deputed by the Amir to attend to the Turkestani. He had met and escorted him to the capital and back again to the western boundary. As the Russian had entered Afghanistan from the Kushkinski Post along the Hari Rud Valley, he was conducted from the capital to the frontier by the route he had first followed. At the frontier he had dismissed his Afghan attendant, who promptly proceeded to disguise himself as a water-carrier and to obtain admission to the station. Here he busied himself daily until, meeting of a sudden his late charge, recognition upon the part of the Russian subject was immediate and the spy was arrested in the act of escaping from the precincts of the fort. Suspicion as to the man's identity became

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assured when a packet of notes was found, wrapped in a rubber sheath, at the bottom of the goat-skin water-bag.

Until the advent of the railway the colony at Kushkinski Post, apart from the garrison, comprised a few Armenian and Persian traders. With the prolongation of the line from Merv the civilian population began to increase rapidly. There is, of course, no hotel in the station; although the officers of the garrison have established a small military club wherein they mess together and where, when the bi-weekly trains bring the supply of ice, there is usually an animated gathering of desolated humanity. At the present time there are in Kushkinski Post 123 buildings, of which some 30 odd belong to private persons. Apart from the garrison the civil population numbers 50 people.

Kushkinski Post station consists of a handsome, spacious structure in the white stone which is brought from quarries in the basin of the Kushk. The railway buildings include a depot with workshops, eight bungalows for the heads of the staff and special quarters for the employees. There are also large barracks for the 6th Company of the 1st Trans-Caspian Railway Battalion, who are not included in the field state of the post. All buildings are lighted by electricity and the workshops are furnished with electric motors, while the water is drawn from springs on Gumesli Mountain.

Kushk region is malarial in consequence of the marshy nature of the surrounding country. For

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some years past measures have been undertaken with a view to draining the swamps and regulating the running of the streams. By these means it has been hoped to render more healthful the general environment of the station, including the fortress works, Kushkinski village, and the district lying between the Afghan frontier post of Kara Teppe and the Russian Alexeieffski and Poltavski villages.

The specific disease which makes duty in the Murghab and Kushk Valleys peculiarly obnoxious is a low fever of an endemic nature. Its pathological history is still undetermined and, although investigations have been made into its character and numerous experiments essayed, the malady is usually fatal. In general, the patient is stricken suddenly when the liver would appear immediately to be affected, the skin becoming yellow and the sufferer lapsing into unconsciousness within a few hours of the attack. Systematic study of the disease has enabled the medical authorities to trace it indirectly to the soil from which, just as in Africa and any of the countries lying within the fever belts, germs are released whenever it is disturbed. In this way the most infectious points in the Kushk and Murghab Valleys are those lying within the cultivated areas, more especially around those places where digging operations are of frequent occurrence. As the order of life becomes more settled and the necessity for any interference with the soil disappears, it is anticipated that the extreme virulence of the disease may diminish. At one time the soldiers of the Railway Battalions were

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so susceptible to its ravages that its course assumed the appearance of an epidemic.

No commercial importance belongs to Kushkinski Post and it is solely the strategic considerations which attach to it that give it so much value. In the hands of Russia and commanding the trade routes into Afghanistan, as well as the road to Herat, Kushkinski Post well might play a leading part in the settlement of questions still outstanding between Russia and Great Britain in respect of Afghanistan. Whether the existence of the post will promote the development of trade relations, which are now restricted by the Amir's Government and directed by the Afghan frontier authorities through Khorassan, remains to be seen. Nothing can underestimate its significance. The post, together with the whole of this branch line, is a deliberate military measure against Afghanistan, the boundaries of which kingdom can almost be seen from the ramparts of the forts which crown the crest of the hills.

Eighteen versts to the south of the fortress, at Chahil Dukteran, there are the post of the Russian Frontier Guard and the present terminus of the Murghab Valley Railway. Beyond may be noted the solitary figures of the Russian sentinels keeping their beat along the extensive line of their position; while southward and serving at the moment for a caravan route lies the road to Herat. As an interesting link in the chain of evidence which points to the future use of this road in another way, there is the existence of a large store of light railway plant prepared for

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the purposes of extending it into Afghanistan itself, whenever the troops of Russia may require to be carried forward to the walls of Herat through the passes of the Paropamisus, a little less than 80 miles.

To Englishmen another, perhaps less direct and more fictitious, interest attaches to this railway. A glance at the map of the Eastern hemisphere will show that the shortest practicable line of communication between London and India lies through Russia and across Central Asia. The direction would be *viâ* Calais, Berlin, Warsaw, Rostov-on-Don, Petrovski, Baku, Krasnovodsk, Merv, Kushkinski, Girishk, and Kandahar. The whole of this distance has now been covered by railway, with the exception of the span of 195 miles across the Caspian Sea, between Baku and Krasnovodsk and the gap of 500 miles which still separates Kushkinski Post from New Chaman. If these sections were bridged, the journey from London to India might be very considerably shortened, assuming that the present rate of speed — 32 miles an hour on the European and 25 on the Asiatic lines — were maintained. The net saving in time, if the railway were completed, would be seven days; while the horrors of the Red Sea and the monsoon would be but bad dreams to the Anglo-Indian traveller. The country between Kushkinski Post and New Chaman presents no obstacle to the engineer; the Paropamisus Range could be crossed by the Ardewan or the Chashma Sabz Pass, neither of which is more than 3400 feet above sea-

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level or 1000 feet higher than that of the table-land on either side. From this point Herat, the garden city of Afghanistan and the key of India, is distant only 30 miles; thence the line would be carried by way of Sabzawar, Farah, Girishk, and Kandahar to New Chaman.

However, if further railway construction in this region is to take place, it will be in connection with the development of plans which concern the requirements of potential strategy rather than the humours of experimental fantasies. For some time past there have been abundant signs that Russia is proposing to find compensation in the Middle East for the downfall of her prestige in Farther Asia. Certainly there is a field for her energies lying fallow in Central Asia. The precise quarter where the furrows are waiting to be ploughed is between the Central Asian Railway and the frontiers of Northern Persia and Northern Afghanistan. It is to-day evident that sooner or later Russia will improve her communications in this direction by adding to the Orenburg-Tashkent system its natural complement — an extension to Termez on the Oxus, where there is a Russian fortress — or by imparting to her position on the Perso-Afghan border that little requisite attention which it merits — a railway to Meshed in Khorassan. Long since is it that these schemes entered the domain of practical politics, the Russian military position on the Middle Oxus requiring an alternative line of communications to that offered by the Amu Daria, which, when frozen in winter with the

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post-roads across the mountains blocked by snow, wraps in dangerous isolation the Russian garrisons at Termes, Kelif, and elsewhere along this section of the frontier. Preliminary surveys for a railway were conducted in 1902, when the routes selected followed from Samarkand the Shar-i-Sabz, Huzar, Shirabad caravan highway to Termes; and, from Farab to Termes, the trade route along the Oxus through Burdalik and Kelif. Further extensions in this direction would provide railway communication between Huzar and Karki by a bridge across the river, by which Huzar would become as important a railway junction as it is a caravan and trading centre. Still more in the future is the strong probability that Karki will be joined with the Afghan frontier at Imam Nasar by following the caravan route from the river, or with Pendjeh across the fringe of the Kara Kum.

Equally determined has been the intention to open up railway communication with the north-eastern frontier of Persia, the original surveys taking place simultaneously with the parties working towards the Oxus. For purposes of the Persian railway, two routes were also inspected in this quarter, the Askhabad-Meshed line receiving the earliest attention and warmest support. This scheme, after passing through the defiles between Firusa, the summer resort of Askhabad society, and Badjira, entered Persian territory at Kettechinar; running up the Deregez Valley and leaving the Atrek waters near their source at Kuchan, it then broke into the Keshef

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Rud Valley, striking the caravan road to Meshed between Durbadam and Imam Kuli. Great initial outlay was made in connection with this railway. Its course had been pegged out under the supervision of M. Stroieff, dragoman of the Russian Consulate at Meshed, with the help of the Ikram-ul-Mul, late Karguzar of Kuchan, to whom 12,000 roubles were presented. Further, it was arranged to open a branch of the Imperial Russian Bank at Meshed to assist the financing of the work, the staff comprising an official from St. Petersburg as manager-in-chief, an assistant manager from Teheran, with Ali Askar Khan, the interpreter of the State Bank at Askhabad. The outbreak of hostilities in Manchuria imposed a temporary check upon the labours of the construction parties, the reflection thus obtained giving rise to the advantage of dropping a branch line from Tejend station on the Central Asian railway *viâ* Sarakhs, Daulatabad, Pul-i-Khatun to between Zul-filkar and Kala Kafir, wherever some future extension of the Askhabad-Meshed line, following the Keshef Rud to its meeting with the Hari Rud on the actual Perso-Afghan frontier, may terminate. The Tejend Rud is the name given to the lower waters of the Hari Rud which, flowing by Herat, receives midway in its course the Keshef Rud and thence runs close to Sarakhs, presenting to any line running along the Hari Rud Valley an alternative approach to the Afghan city.

That Herat and Meshed are the objectives of Russian railway policy is obvious from a pamphlet

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issued in 1902 by the Topographical Bureau in St. Petersburg and entitled *Railways Across Persia*. In its pages a railway was projected from Kara Kliss, a station midway between Tiflis and Erivan, *viâ* Tabriz, Teheran, Shahrud, to Meshed. The mileage, cost, the number of sidings, and names of stations were all laid down. The principal stations in the first section — Kara Kliss to Tabriz — were Erivan and Julfa. At this moment the span from Kara Kliss to Julfa, a distance of 135 miles, is completed, the first hundred miles — Kara Kliss to Erivan — being open to traffic and the remaining 35 miles — Erivan to Julfa — in working order. From Julfa a carriage-way, constructed under Russian auspices and in all essentials a Russian military road, runs to Tabriz, so that Russian schemes for broad gauge railways to Herat and Meshed are at least removed from their incipient obscurity.

CHAPTER IX

THE MURGHAB VALLEY

THE river Murghab, which, with the Kashan and the Kushk streams, waters the Merv oasis and then disappears in the sands of the Kara Kum desert, rises in the mass of mountains connecting the eastern extremities of the Safed Koh and Tir Band-i Turkestan Ranges. It flows in a westerly direction through the great valley separating these mountain chains and, after receiving the waters of numerous tributaries, turns towards the north-west to pass the Afghan fortress of Bala Murghab and the post of Karawal Khana. At this latter point it receives the waters of the Kaisar affluent. Continuing in a north-westerly direction it flows past Maruchak, lying on the right bank, where a short distance below it is joined by the Kashan stream. Pendjeh and Ak Tepe are both situated upon the left bank. At Ak Tepe the Kushk River, which rises in the Paropamisus Range, unites with it and from this point the Murghab runs in a due northerly direction past Yulatan to Merv, thence running dry in the desert.

Within Russian territory the Murghab River irrigates exclusively the Merv district, and its length

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within the Trans-Caspian Province is about 400 versts. If its numerous bends were taken into account the length of the stream would be 850 versts. The Kushk River waters Russian territory for a distance of 100 versts, from the Russo-Afghan frontier to its confluence with the Murghab; the Kashan for 60 versts. The width of the Murghab at the Kaushut-Khan-Band, 28 versts above the town of Merv, is about 23 sagues; but at Merv itself it narrows to 12 sagues. Its mean depth is 7 feet. The rise of the water begins in the middle of March and the fall finishes three months later. Between June and the middle of October the level of the river is determined by the rainfall and snow in the neighbouring mountains. About June, when the river has fallen, the population experiences the want of the water which is necessary for the autumn crop of cotton. In years of drought, when the dearth of water is felt much earlier — during the period of the ripening of the crops, in fact — the population are obliged to abandon the greater portion of their harvest.

The country through which these rivers flow is, in the main, a mixture of desert waste and cultivated strip, with rising uplands carpeted in spring by bright flowers and hidden in winter by heavy snows. Roads meander along the valleys, sometimes by means of rocks and boulders crossing and recrossing the stream many times in short stretches or, at others, wandering far away from the water-side to traverse the broken spurs of hills. Where signs of

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cultivation exist, there are indications that the population has regained confidence in the Russian domination of the district. Fields and irrigation canals have been cleaned and restored; the sparkle of the little rills is reflected in the brilliant sunshine.

From the broad uplands of the watershed, from where to the river bed below there is in general a tedious scramble across a confusion of stones and brushwood, the tumbled masses of the rounded slopes are seen to sink into long undulating sweeps. Where the Kushk and Murghab Valleys become entangled, a line of sand cliffs disappears in one direction into the haze of the Kara Kum and merges in another with the Karabyl plateau. In the distance the river, spreading itself over a labyrinth of canals, passes through a rapid succession of changing scenes, until, in the broad arid wastes of the Kara Kum, its waters are finally and completely lost. South-west of Bala Murghab the valley narrows to the dimensions and rugged outlines of a defile. Through this the river rolls, tumbling with thunderous clamour, towards Pendjeh oasis, where it acquires a breadth of one to three miles. At Pul-i-Khisti, identical with Tash Kepri and a little above the Russian settlement of Takhta Bazaar, the stream is joined by the waters of the Kushk rivulet, when it is not consumed in irrigation. From this point the united rivers flow onward to the oases of Yulatan and Merv, passing through a broad flat valley, two miles in width, bounded on either side by sandstone heights. In this stage the river is slow running,

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deep, and difficult to cross, and possessing but few fords. Its average breadth varies between 40 and 70 yards and the most prominent feature is its extreme sinuosity. Beyond Bala Murghab the river valley is contained on the left bank by an undulating chain of low hills, high rocky gorges enclosing the right. At this point the sides are steep, with a possible height of 24 feet and a surface growth of shrubs and willows. A narrow, level strip, tufted with scattered grasses, lies between the water's edge and the hills on the left bank. The river itself flows in a single channel, clinging rather closely to the left of the valley. It possesses a mean breadth of 70 yards and a maximum current of 5 miles. The depth of the ford is between 3 to 4 feet.

The valleys which debouch upon the river are quite spacious and contain small plots of cultivated ground, with here and there a village. Unfortunately, while the banks of the river are fertile the valleys themselves are exceedingly unhealthful — a low fever, pathologically identical in the two districts of Murghab and Kushk, permeating them. Although the great majority of the inhabitants avow themselves immune from the disease, they are averse to settling in the valleys. A feature of the river is the abruptness with which the broad open spaces are changed to narrow gorges of no remarkable height. This trait in the character of an otherwise respectable inland river compresses so great a volume of water into so small a channel that its passage is attended with risk. It is not until the spreading

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expanses of the Pendjeh, Yulatan, and Merv oases have exhausted it that the stream is crossed with convenience. At Bala Murghab, where the current is very strong and the depth uncertain, deep holes in the bottom and masses of protruding rocks, added to the hidden dangers from quicksands, make the task of fording an intricate proceeding. There are two fords at this point, and a similar number are in use at Maruchak, Karawal Khana, and Pendjeh, while the Russians have restored many stone bridges which formerly existed in the Kushk Valley near the junction of the Murghab and Kushk Rivers, at Maruchak and Bala Murghab. The liability of the two rivers to sudden floods renders all fords uncertain and insecure, particularly in the lower stretches between Pendjeh and Merv. More often than not necessity dictates the prudence of stripping to the skin, when the native, a prayer to Allah on his lips and his possessions strapped in a bundle on his head, flounders through the water to arrive damp, disconsolate, and very scared on the opposite side. Nevertheless, the best fords are found usually where the stream flows swiftly through a narrow bed. At such a crossing there is a firm bottom, and foothold is readily secured.

Many contrivances are used to cross the rivers of High Asia. Where the current is sluggish an inflated goat-skin is employed. This system is in vogue on the Oxus and, in lesser degree, on the Helmund, where rafts of bushes are preferred. Along the Murghab the indifferent nature of the fords and the

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swiftness of the current in the narrow channels of the river make the use of a boat, drawn along a hawser, more suited to the needs of the occasion. Fords on the Murghab are not so frequent as on the Oxus.

The Kushk Valley extends in Russian and Afghan territory some 14 miles. It possesses an average breadth of three-quarters of a mile. Its hills, low and rounded, are a conglomerate of clay and red sand, but bare of trees and with their faces dotted with mud cabins. An extensive system of irrigation is fed by the river and there is much cultivation on the tops and sides of the hills. The produce of the fields is only sufficient for the immediate wants of the native settlers, although the Russians hope, now a garrison has been established at Kushkinski Post, that the demands of the troops will spur the villagers to greater agricultural activity. In Afghan territory the valley is the habitat of the Jamshidis, who, quiet and tractable, reveal few wants and even fewer interests. Excessive irrigation has done so much to spread the fever that the population throughout the valley has been dwindling gradually. There are now less than 4000 families in the entire valley, years of peace and prosperity seeming to accentuate the restlessness which underlies the nature of all nomadic people. A weekly bazaar is held at Kushkinski Post; similar gatherings taking place at Afghan Kushk, Bala Murghab, Maruchak, and in the Pendjeh oasis at Takhta Bazaar. Salt, rice, soap, carpets, and horses are all brought to the markets, while

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the Russians encourage the native merchants under their protection to display stocks of Russian sugar, matches, and cotton prints. Silks from Meshed and Bokhara are also in evidence, but nothing of any English or Indian origin. French, American, and German products are barred no less rigorously, although German matches and French sugar occasionally escape the specific ostracism which applies to British manufactures.

In the Kushk Valley the fertility of the land is dependent upon the flooding of the river by the spring rains. As a consequence an ever-present feeling of irritation exists in the lower parts of the Kushk Valley against the Afghan villagers, who control the head waters of the river and divert it to their own fields. This difficulty prevails along the entire line of the frontier in this region, the demarcation of the boundary between the two races leaving the heads of the canals in Afghan territory. There are many exceptions to the misfortune, and, so far as possible, the division is arranged in a spirit of mutual ownership, although the natives, on the Russian side of the frontier, have no claim to compensation if there should be an insufficient quantity. With a river like the Kusk, which possesses an irregular volume, the difficulty is much greater than in the case of the Murghab or even the Hari Rud. Water means to these primitive peoples life and existence; and, as cultivation is only rendered possible by most assiduous irrigation, the task of conserving the supply involves incessant labour. Although



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agricultural activity prevails principally in the Murghab and Kushk district there are a few cultivated places in the Kashan Valley. It would be useless to make any comparison between the former valleys and the Kashan. The Kashan valley contains a small strip, level, well watered, and about half a mile in width, through which percolates a narrow stream. In spite of its culturable soil the Kashan district is not frequently inhabited, as in the extreme hot weather the Kashan River is exhausted by the claims made upon it for purposes of irrigation; below Robat-i-Kashan, except during the spring floods, there is no trace of water. A similar condition of affairs characterises its companion stream the Kushk; at the point of union with the Murghab it is frequently reduced to a mere trickle. None the less during the spring rains each of these rivers is liable to sudden floods. Prior to the advent of the railway at Tanur Sangi there were but few settlements in the valley. There was one at Karawal Khana on the right bank of the Murghab and 12 miles south of Maruchak, while the next of any consequence was at Bala Murghab, upon the same bank and more than 20 miles away from Maruchak. At the time when the Anglo-Russian Commission was adjusting the line of the Russo-Afghan frontier in this region, the absence of habitation and human settlement of any kind was most marked. Time has brought a change. -

Tanur Sangi is now one of the termini of the Murghab Valley Railway. Barracks for the troops

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who are occupying the post have been built on the heights of the valley, the dense vegetation has been burnt off, and a system of drainage applied to the neighbouring swamps. For the moment the Maruchak district, extending equally within Russian and Afghan territory, is pregnant with prospects, and the advent of the Russians there has been followed by an influx of native settlers. Upon the Afghan side of the river there are similar indications, by reason of the arrival of the levies who garrison the Afghan forts at Bala Murghab, Maruchak, Kala Nao, and elsewhere.

The river is the dividing-point between Russian and Afghan possessions at Maruchak for 15 miles. Still it is interesting to note that the natural frontier between Maruchak and Pendjeh is at the northern end of the Maruchak Valley, where the hills, closing in upon the river on both sides, separate the Maruchak acres from those of the Pendjeh oasis. Formerly, too, the Murghab flowed down the northern end of the Maruchak Valley, washing the western face. It has now changed its course and, sweeping from west to east, washes the eastern aspect. This deviation had an important bearing upon the findings of the Anglo-Russian Commission. Under their correct and literal interpretation of the protocol the Russians were debarred from exercising any claim over the waters of canals employed for irrigation, provided their heads were in Afghan territory. By the change in the direction of the Murghab the head of the waters supplying the Pendjeh oasis,

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which proceed from the Band-i-Nadir Canal on the left bank of the Murghab, was placed within Afghan territory. A modification of the situation was urged; finally the boundary was made to pass from Zulfikar on the Hari Rud to the Kushk and from the head of the canal in the Kashan Valley to the head of the Band-i-Nadir on the Murghab, due west of Maruchak instead of to a point north of it. This readjustment permitted control of the head waters of the Band-i-Nadir to revert to Russia.

The Afghan fortress of Maruchak has experienced a varying fortune, the vicissitudes of which once brought it to ruin and caused its defences to be abandoned. Since then the advance of the Russians has thrown it into prominence again. Its walls have been restored, although it can never serve any other purpose than that of a frontier post of observation. The fortress is in the shape of a square of which the outer walls, measuring some 600 yards, rise 20 feet from the side of a moat. The main entrance faces the river on the west. Other entrances of less importance are placed at the north-east and south-east angles. In the centre, rising from a circular mound some 40 feet in height with a diameter of 250 yards, is an inner fortress. Quarters for the troops have been constructed along the eastern wall where there is now accommodation for 1000 men. Gun towers stand at the four corners of the main wall and an infantry platform runs round the inner face of the square, a few feet below the parapet. At an angle of the inner fortress and slightly higher

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than the fortress itself is the citadel, some 80 yards square, where a last stand would be made. The walls and bastions of this are about 15 feet high and gun platforms have been constructed at the corners.

Bala Murghab, a sister fortress, is smaller than Maruchak and lies about 46 miles south-east of Pendjeh. The principal work consists of a fort 120 yards square, situated on a mound itself 30 feet in height; the walls of the fort rise a further 15 feet. An underground passage from it leads to the river and there are quarters for 200 cavalry, 300 infantry, and one battery of artillery, besides storehouses and a magazine. The interior of the fort in its present size does not afford accommodation for the existing garrison, all of whom are Irregulars with the exception of the officers. The larger proportion of the mounted men have their lines outside the walls. On a mound, which hitherto has marked the ruins of an ancient citadel, a more commodious fort has been constructed. It stands at the bend of the river, covering Robat-i-Ishmail and protecting the entrance to the Mangan defile. Its dimensions provide for a square of 200 yards, with walls 25 feet in height and an inner defence work standing some 50 feet higher.

Independent of the regular garrison at Herat, there is a levy roll for the Bala Murghab district of 1000 mounted and dismounted men. Two hundred of the former are supposed always to be mustered as Bala Murghab finds details for a number of outlying fatigues, including pickets at the fords

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and certain mounted patrols. In the immediate vicinity of the fort there is a settlement containing several thousand families. It should be remembered that the garrison at this point is comprised of Afghan Irregulars, who still retain their old titles and organisation. Their company strength is 100 and each company is quite independent of the remaining ones. Five companies form the command of a Sarhang, whose superior officer is a Sartip. Each company commander is known as a Sad Bashi; and for every ten men there is a Dah Bashi. In the regular Afghan army the commissioned ranks are known by the English equivalent; but in general the military organisation, whether regular or irregular in men as in *matériel*, is hopeless.

No point in the Murghab region is more important than the Pendjeh oasis as an agricultural colony. It is principally confined to the limits of a single valley, some 25 miles in length and 2 miles in breadth. Dotted about its spreading expanse there are a number of tiny settlements, containing in all some eight to nine thousand households. The areas under cultivation do not return sufficient grain to support so large a population; there is, therefore, a constant migration of Pendjeh Sariks to the adjacent valleys of Kushk and Maruchak as well as to the more distant oases of Yulatan and Tejend, where they have become ardent agriculturists.

The settlers in the Pendjeh Valley are divided into five sections. Although united by tribal ties inter-communal jealousies are responsible for continuous

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discord. The richest and most influential section is that of the Suktis, who occupy the land on the western bank of the Murghab between Pendjeh, Kuhnah, and Sari Yazı, a distance of some 35 miles. The Harzagis settlement, lying on the same bank, extends between Takhta Bazaar and Maruchak; between these two large settlements are the areas occupied by the Khorassanlis. The two remaining sections, the Bairach and the Alishah, share the opposite bank.

The occupation of the Pendjeh Valley by the Sariks took place about thirty years ago, when they were turned out of Merv by certain of the Tekke tribes. At first the Suktis were the sole possessors of the district; but, as other parties came in detachments from Merv, the different sections, increasing in numbers and in strength, were able to enforce upon the earlier arrivals a general division of the valley. Under existing arrangements the Pendjeh oasis has developed, the advent of the railway having attracted the attention of the Russians to its agricultural capacity. There must be now some 75,000 acres under cultivation, the entire area owing its fertility to the Murghab River, whose waters are confined by the Band-i-Nadir.

The Yulatan oasis, which is inhabited by those Sarik Turkomans who moved from the Pendjeh Valley, similarly possesses an unfailing supply of water from the huge dam, Band-i-Kazakli. This is drawn from the Murghab River by a canal and affords water to 125,000 acres, at a velocity of 1500

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feet per second. The depth of the canal is sufficient to carry a camel off its legs. Near the site of the dam are the ruins of the Sultan-i-band, a work far vaster than any of the present day. It gave 28 feet head of water and made the fields and gardens of Old Merv the most fertile region upon the globe's surface. The Sultan-i-band was destroyed in 1784 by the Amir Murad of Bokhara, an act which completely ruined the prosperity of Merv. Just a century later the Tsar, to whose private estates the site of Old Merv belongs, ordered the construction of an anicut 13 miles up stream. The work was carried out by Colonel Kashtalinski, superintendent of the State domains at Bairam Ali. It includes a dam which gives 14 feet head of water and it is connected with a series of storage basins, feeding a central canal 20 miles long. This in its turn supplies 35 miles of secondary canals and 105 miles of distributaries. The cost of these splendid operations was about £105,000; an expenditure which was declared by an eminent English authority on irrigation to be one-fifth of what a similar work would entail in India. It is in contemplation to restore the Sultan-i-band at an estimated cost of £210,000, by which a further measure of prosperity will be assured to the locality. The area thus irrigated amounts to 15,000 acres; 5000 of which are under cotton, while 3675 grow wheat and barley. The whole is let out to Turkomans and Bokharans. The mountains of cotton waiting for transport by rail in the season are a standing proof of the excel-

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lence of crops, which are said to return but little short of one hundredfold. The demand for farms within this fertile area is so great that the natives compete for the privilege of holding one at a rent in kind amounting to a quarter of the gross produce. In spite of prohibitions subletting is very rife and one plot frequently supports several families.

CHAPTER X

HERAT AND THE WESTERN BORDER

THE province of Herat extends from near the sources of the Hari Rud on the east to the Persian frontier on the west, and from the Russian southern boundary to the northern limits of Seistan. The area is 300 miles from east to west and 200 miles from north to south. North, south, and west there are tracts of unproductive country, presenting facilities for development only over restricted surfaces. In the east the upper reaches of the Hari Rud Valley stretch away to the mountain regions of the Koh-i-Baba. It has been estimated that the valley of the Hari Rud is capable of furnishing supplies for an army of occupation which should not exceed 150,000 men. It is this fact, coupled with the value of its position as the converging point of roads from the Caspian, Merv, Meshed, Bokhara, and from India through Kandahar, which has invested Herat with the title of The Key of India. The Hari Rud oasis presents a wonderful appearance of fertility; near the city, groves of pistachia and mulberry trees, blackberry bushes, wild roses, and innumerable settlements abound. The Hari Rud, flowing in a single channel 100 to 140 feet in width

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which diminishes as the summer wanes, has been the means of converting into a smiling paradise the surrounding wilderness. Flood-water in this river lasts from the close of January until the end of March, when fords are dangerous to cross. The subsidence of flood-water in April makes it more readily passable, the average depth of the fords then measuring 4 feet. Later, when the warmer weather appears, the permanent channel breaks up into long lakes, fed by springs and underground continuations of supplementary streams. The northern extremity of the river, which waters the Tejend oasis and the Sarakhs region, preserves in the main the characteristics of the upper stream. The undulating country between the Hari Rud and the Murghab, extending from the northern slopes of the Paropamisus to the edge of the Kara Kum, is called Badghis. At one time this district included the oasis of Yulatan and even now it embraces Pendjeh. Across it, along the banks of the Murghab and through the valley of the Kushk, runs the direct road from Merv to Herat. From the levels of valleys within Russian jurisdiction, which are about 2000 feet above sea-level, the road rises throughout a distance of 35 miles until it pierces the Paropamisus Range by the Ardewan Pass, 4700 feet above sea-level. From these mountains it descends across the broken slopes of the Koh-i-Mulla Khwaja until it meets at last the alluvial flats of the Hari Rud plain, wherein the city of Herat stands, 2600 feet above sea-level.

The city of Herat, built entirely of mud with

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certain outworks lying beyond its walls, stands in a hollow. It forms a quadrangle 1600 yards by 1500 yards. On the western, southern, and eastern faces the wall is a straight line, the only projecting points being the gateways and the bastions. On the northern face, the line is broken by the old Ark or citadel, which stands back about 200 yards from the main wall and is situated upon a high, artificial mound, which is 250 feet in width and between 50 and 60 feet in height. Above this the walls of the city rise an additional 30 feet. There are five gates — the Kutabchak near the north-east angle of the wall and the Malik gate at the re-entering angle formed by the wall of the Ark and the continuation of the north wall. The other gates are on the western, southern, and eastern faces, the names respectively being the Irak, Kandahar, and Kushk. Four streets, running from the centre of each face, meet at the Charsu, a domed square covered with beams and matting in the heart of the city. A wide road encircles the walls on the inside, although its upkeep has been sadly neglected. The defences of the city are contained by the wall which stands above the mound. On its outer slope there were at one time two parallel trenches, covered by low parapets; but the trenches, like the moat at the foot of the mound, are now choked up. There are 25 bastions on each wall. The gates, defended by works differing from one another in shape, are of irregular design. They resemble redans with sides of unequal length, and project about 200 feet beyond the main wall. The

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defences of the gateways are of a lower profile than those of the main works. At the apex of the projection a small rectangular traverse screens the postern.

The northern wall is irregular. Near its centre, thrown back about 200 yards from the main wall and standing on a mound of its own, is the position of the old citadel. A "return" in the wall, leading down on this work from the eastern portion of the north face, terminates on the counterscarp of its ditch. The western face, retired about 100 yards behind the eastern face, connects with the north-west angle of the citadel by a slight bend. There are two gateways on this front, the one about 200 yards to the westward of the north-east angle and the other in the main wall. This latter is unprovided with the irregular projecting work attached to the others.

The wall of the fort is about 14 feet thick at the base, 9 feet thick at the top and 18 feet high, exclusive of the parapet. The parapet is $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick at the base, 9 inches at the crest, and $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height. It is loop holed and crowned with the ruins of small battlements which, like so much attaching to Herat, have been permitted to crumble away. In several places the walls have broken down, the repairs subsequently effected adding to the general insecurity of what has remained rather than improving the original breaches. The width of the pathway behind the parapet is 6 feet; but there are many gaps, and continuity of communication is preserved only by the severe physical exertion of flying

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leaps. Their condition renders them ill-adapted to the employment of artillery, while the ramps leading up to this pathway are barely broad enough to admit the passage of a single man.

At one time this wall was flanked by small exterior towers, placed at intervals of 100 feet. They varied in size and are now so generally in ruin that it is difficult to estimate their dimensions. In their original state they were probably from 40 to 60 feet in diameter, the larger towers being 30 feet in width and projecting 25 feet. In contrast with the containing wall of the city the wall of the fort possesses an outward inclination, equal perhaps to one-seventh of its height. The slope of the towers is generally greater; many of them are splayed at the base to accommodate their foundations to the sloping surface upon which they rest. The whole work appears originally to have been constructed of sun-dried brick, backed with layers of moist earth. Some of the towers have foundations and facings of rough stone or burnt brick, laid in mud. The wall itself is a very old one; stone, brick, and earth have been used indiscriminately, so that it now presents a patchwork appearance.

The interior slope of the mound, upon which the walls stand, is steep and from the base of the wall drops perpendicularly into the town. No attention whatever appears to have been paid to this part of the fortifications. The inhabitants of the city have been for several generations in the habit of removing earth from it for the construction or repair of their

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dwelling. At one time, too, houses were erected close to the foot of the rampart and also upon it, the slope being excavated to admit of the walls being erected against it. A partial collapse of the mound has followed, the fallen masses of earth serving as a convenient resting-place for the dead.

The old citadel is a brick structure 150 yards long from east to west and 50 yards wide. It occupies an elevation of its own, and, when erected, stood nearly in the centre of the north face of the city. It was flanked by several towers, differing greatly in size; those at the angles were the largest, while those on the north-east angle were the most imposing. The interior, in part occupied by Feramorz Khan, the Commander-in-Chief, is divided into three courts. The inhabited portion is a lofty building, supported by four bastions along its face, with the entrance gate facing the main street to the Charsu. It fills a space 110 yards in length by 60 yards in breadth. The Ark, from its massive appearance, is very dignified, but it is not calculated to withstand protracted defence if the town itself were captured. Its walls, thickly built but of inferior masonry, are exposed from base to parapet, and a few shells dropped behind them would create great havoc.

The Ark-i-nao, or new citadel, serves as a parade-ground for the garrison. Weak both in plan and profile, it is constructed in advance of the mound, but 80 feet below it and upon a level with the country. It consists of four straight walls 300 yards in length. The face is flanked by five semicircular

towers, each possessing a diameter of 30 feet. The walls are 13 feet thick at the base and 8 feet at the top, crowned on their outer edge by a parapet 6 feet high and $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick. There was once a ditch 30 feet in width and 15 feet in depth at a distance of 60 feet from its base, but it is now a general receptacle for the refuse of the city.

Within recent years the fortifications of Herat have undergone radical alteration. At one time, prior to the Pendjeh crisis, the city could not be said to possess an esplanade nor any free field of fire. Detached buildings, even small villages, surrounded it, while cultivation extended close to the walls; and where agriculture ended the cemeteries of the city began. Mosques, tombs, and reservoirs stood opposite the gateways, some of them lying within 100 yards of the walls. Vast mounds of earth were also close at hand. Many of these defects were removed¹ under the guidance of the British officers who were assisting in the demarcation of the Russo-Afghan boundary in 1884–1887; in 1903–1904, under the supervision of Feramorz Khan, additional improvements were made and a number of mountain and field batteries installed.

In general the Herati is not a fighting man and cares little for military appearances. Indeed, if choice were left to the Heratis they would sooner surrender at once to the Russians than run the risk of future disturbances. The garrison is not generally drawn from the locality and seldom includes many

¹ "The Indian Borderland." Colonel Sir T. H. Holdich.

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Herati, Hazara, or Taimani recruits. Commanded by Feramorz Khan, it is composed mainly of regiments from Kandahar and Kabul, whose men lounge through the streets in unkempt undress or clad in dirty linen and to whom belongs such little martial spirit as may be detected in the city. In this direction nothing can be more marked than the difference between the Herati and the Afghan soldier. The former, a peasant pure and simple, is unversed in military science, while it is a rare sight to see the soldiers without an extraordinary number and variety of weapons attached to their persons. Each carries, as a rule, two pistols, a sword, rifle, and many knives, their swagger and overbearing disposition causing them to be hated by the wretched population. The position of the city to-day as between Russia and India is rather that of a woman whose wares are put up to the highest bidder. It is not particularly partial to the rule of the Amir, to the overtures of Russia, or to the influence of India. One might say that it were indifferent alike to each of these three interested parties and that it is merely a question of price which will determine its surrender. It must be confessed that the fortress occupies an unfortunate position. Whatever the garrison might attempt in support of the huge earthworks which the place boasts, there is no doubt that the sympathies of the population — if the history of the past goes for anything — would be given to any who contrived to evict the Afghans; and, as all reports concur in alluding to the lavish manner in which Russian roubles

have circulated in the province, the statement may be hazarded that, under certain contingencies, the tribes on the north-western border of Afghanistan would declare for the Russians. Upon this aspect of the situation various changes introduced by the Amir into the administration of Herat province, and concerning equally all posts along the banks of the Oxus and the western border, have direct bearing. Although there is practically no intercourse between the Afghan and Russian posts on either bank of the Amu Daria, indeed the ferry station at Chushka Guzar is constantly sniped from the Afghan bank by Pathan pickets, there has been an insidious growth of association between the Herat officials and the Russians. Quite lately the Kazi Saad-ud-Din, Governor of Herat, was recalled, the Shaghassi Mohammed Sarwar Khan taking his place, while a warning was administered to the commander-in-chief. There is no doubt that these officials accepted complimentary gifts from the Russian officials at Merv, and the transference of the one and the rebuke of the other may check the propensity of the native to find in the efficacious application of the Russian rouble a panacea for all evils. In respect of the soldiers themselves, orders have been issued from Kabul that all detachments on frontier duty are to be relieved monthly. Obviously Herat is too close to the Russian border not to have been intimidated by the spectacle of Russia's strength in Central Asia. A similar state of things might not be expected to prevail in Kabul and Kandahar. Kabul is too much

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under the personal sway of the Amir to express any active interest in Russia or India, while Kandahar has been associated too closely with the reverses which British arms have experienced in Afghanistan to have overmuch respect for the greatness of Hindustan. Russia is really the supreme and dominating factor in Afghanistan, not only along the northern, eastern, and western frontiers, but throughout the kingdom.

Herat is a dirty town. The small lanes, crooked and narrow, which branch from the main thoroughfares, are roofed and their gloom offers safe harbourage for the perpetration of every possible offence. The breadth of the streets is only 12 feet, but in their narrowest parts even this space is reduced. Pools of stagnant water left by the rains, piles of refuse thrown from the houses, together with dead cats, dogs, and the excrement of human beings, mingle their effluvia in these low tunnels. Much of the city has been abandoned and various travellers, in reporting their experiences, agree that the bazaars are of a very inferior order. On either side of the streets there are spacious serais where the merchants have their depots. The western face of the city is the least populated, the buildings in this quarter being a mass of ruins. The houses are constructed usually in the form of hollow squares. They are commonly of one storey, built of brick and mud, with very thick walls. The roofs are vaulted and composed, equally with the walls, of mud; the entrances are low and winding. These houses are quite incombustible. The larger establishments have

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stable and servants' courts attached to them, and every courtyard has, in its centre, a well or small reservoir for the reception of water. All the houses are more or less capable of resisting men armed with rifles, and a determined garrison might, by barricading the streets leading to the ramparts and loopholing the adjacent houses, protract the defence of the place for some time after the walls had been gained by the enemy. There are several spacious caravansaries in the town, all of which open upon the street leading from the Kandahar gate to the citadel and would serve, in emergency, for the accommodation of troops.

The principal building in Herat is the Masjid-i-Jama, which comprises an area of 800 yards square. It was built at the end of the fifteenth century, in the reign of Shah Husein by his relative Prince Shibali. When perfect it was 465 feet long and 275 feet wide; it had 408 cupolas, 130 windows, 444 pillars, 6 entrances, and was adorned in the most magnificent manner with gilding, carving, precious mosaic, and other elaborate and costly embellishments. It stands in the north-east quarter of the city, about 300 yards from the east walls.

The palace of Chahar Bagh is situated to the west of the Masjid-i-Jama and was originally the winter residence of the chiefs of Herat. It is now the residence of the Governor of the city, but has been considerably enlarged and improved. A fine garden has been laid out with flower-beds and a fountain. It is enclosed on either side.

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The inhabitants of Herat, who are mostly Shiah Mohammedans, comprise Afghans, Hazaras, Jamshidis, and Tiamanis, with 700 Hindoos and some 400 families of Jews. Its population has always been subject to constant fluctuation. The existing number is now a little less than 18,000 people, exclusive of the garrison, which in peace numbers 5 regiments of regular infantry, 20 squadrons of cavalry, 1 battalion of sappers, and 8 batteries.

(The city has declined considerably from its quondam opulence. There is scarcely any trade and the houses are deserted. It is, nevertheless, famous for its fruit and its breed of horses; but the Heratis have endured too many of "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" to be able to withstand adversity and bad seasons. Wars and sieges, pestilence and famine have had their effect; and the scene, which Vambéry described so brightly, is now sombre and melancholy. No longer is Herat the great central market between India and Persia.) It still receives a certain amount of merchandise from Kabul, such as shawls, indigo, sugar, chintz, muslin, bafta, kincob, hides, and leather. These are exported to Meshed, Yezd, Teheran, Baghdad, and Kirman, and exchanged for tea, sugar-candy, china-ware, broad-cloth, chintz, silk, copper, pepper, dates, shawls, numnahs, carpets, and all kinds of spices. Silk is obtainable in the vicinity of Herat, and lambs' fleeces and sheepskins are made up locally into caps and cloaks. There are, too, a number of native craftsmen who work in silk and metals, leather,

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iron, and wood; but there are few opportunities for their skill and no money with which to pay for it. The carpets of Herat, once so famed for softness and for the brilliance and permanence of their colours, are no longer in demand. At one time they were made in all sizes, ranging in price from 10 to 1000 rupees; but their day is gone. Indeed, in its present impoverished state, the city is eloquent only of a bygone grandeur. Everything is decayed and decrepit.

CHAPTER XI

KANDAHAR

THE road from Herat to Kandahar lies through districts rich in supplies. From Herat there are two great roads, a northern and a southern, the latter passing through Sabzawar, Farah, and Girishk to Kandahar, in which district it crosses the Zamindawar country, peopled in the main by the Duranis as far as the fords on the Helmund.

Sabzawar, which is 280 miles from Kandahar, is situated almost midway between Herat and Farah — 90 miles from Herat and 71 miles from Farah. It stands 3550 feet above sea-level on the left bank of the Harud River, in an elbow of the stream and at the foot of the outlying spurs of the main ranges. Beyond and partly surrounding it there is a wide open plain, some 4 miles in circumference, well irrigated from the waters of the Harud River and, as a consequence, highly productive. The Sabzawar district contains the most fertile areas in the Herat Province, a benevolent attention upon the part of Nature that renders the region of service as an intermediate base of supplies. No force, indeed, could resist the temptation of staying at such a point to refresh both man and beast, and to re-

assemble its transport. The position is readily protected and the defensive value of the heights, which lie 2 miles distant to the south of the town, could be supplemented by the flooding of the lowlands from numerous water-courses which intersect the plain. The town draws its water from the Harud River, but certain of the villages are dependent upon canals. Several ruins impart an air of desolation to the plain, yet a pleasing sense of cultivation exists around the town itself, arising from the sparkle of running water and the freshness of green trees.

In recent years Sabzawar has outgrown its original dimensions, and the fort, a square structure with walls 200 yards to 250 yards in length, seven circular bastions on each front and one gate in the south face, has been abandoned. Its walls are in ruins and the interior is uninhabited, save for a small colony of Shikarpuri Hindoos. Outside the wall is a ditch, now dry and partially filled with refuse. In the centre of this forlorn scene there is the Governor's residence, permitting a pleasant view of green trees and fresh-looking grass, cool and even healthful. The town proper, although such a dignified description is inaccurate as the great majority of the population live in villages beyond the walls, is well-to-do, thriving, and the centre of a busy trade. Between Nasratabad and itself trade is peculiarly active, the hides, wool, goat-skins, and dried fruits forwarded from Seistan to Turkestan making it a point of call. Piece-goods, sugar, and iron-ware are imported in

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return. The export trade of the town has an annual value of 1,500,000 rupees Indian, and the revenue of the district is 33,000 toman in cash, and 4000 kharwars in grain. The trade is controlled by Russian Armenian merchants who, resident in its vicinity, travel between Seistan and the surrounding region, pushing articles of Russian manufacture. Their activity in this respect has created an important demand for such goods, which quite ousts the few signs of Indian trade that the place at one time revealed.

Sabzawar, the town, is enclosed within a high wall, pierced by four gates — the Irak gate on the west, the Nishapur gate on the east, the Herat gate on the north, and the Farah gate on the south. The bazaar, in which are nearly 800 shops, stretches between the eastern and western gates across the town. Its breadth is possibly half a mile and the circumference of the town is a little under $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The town is only a gathering place for the district which supports a number of villages and, together with the enveloping pasturage and a wide belt of cultivation, is inhabited by Nurzai Duranis. Each village is a small fort in itself and is surrounded by a high mud-wall erected for purposes of security. In size these forts are about 60 yards square; in all there may be some 5000 households in the district, which may be apportioned into 4500 in the villages, 400 in the town, 100 in the fort, with a combined population of 12,000 souls.

Before reaching Farah it is necessary to cross the Farah Rud. This river, rising in the Taimani coun-

try, flows past Farah and Lash into the Hamun at its north-west angle, after a southerly course 200 miles in length. Its volume varies with the seasons. The water is usually clear and not quite drinkable for, after the main stream has been exhausted by the fields, the pools which remain in its deeper parts quickly become stagnant. In the spring it is a wide, deep river, always with sufficient water for irrigation in its course: even when nearly dry, water is to be found by digging a foot into the river-bed. In the summer it is crossed on inflated skins or rafts of wood and reeds. The banks of the Farah Rud are covered with a jungle growth of tamarisk and mimosa. At the point where it is crossed by the north road from Herat to Kandahar it is fordable, although the bed is very irregular, with alternate rapids and deep pools. The ford is 1000 feet in breadth, but the channel in the dry season contracts to 50 yards, with a depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet. During the flood season caravans are apt to be detained for many weeks. At Farah the banks are 400 yards apart, with a stream in the dry season of 150 yards in breadth and 2 feet of water. At this point it is both clear and rapid.

Farah, 2460 feet above sea-level, lies 170 miles south of Herat, 71 miles from Sabzawar on the south Kandahar road, 150 miles from Girishk, and 225 miles from Kandahar. It is a square, walled town; lying north and south, and standing well out in the plain, it has a diameter of one mile and is in ruins. The wall by which it is surrounded is strongly

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reminiscent of Herat and comprises an enormous embankment of earth, mixed with chopped straw. A covered way entirely surrounds it on the outside, and its original height was between 35 and 40 feet. Towers rested on the ramparts at one time, but, deserted by its inhabitants and neglected by the garrison which is its sole population, it has fallen altogether from its high estate. The town has two gates, that of Herat in the centre of the north face and that of Kandahar exactly opposite on the south side, the citadel occupying the north angle of the wall. Farah is no longer a city. Desolate, ruined, and abandoned, its position still is of extreme importance, as it commands the Herat and Kandahar road and the northern entrance into Seistan. But the water in the fort is bad and the place is unhealthful. A general bonfire of the remains should complete the wreck which time has so nearly accomplished. Nowadays it does not contain more than fifty houses, yet it could easily hold several thousand. Those still standing are concealed by the ruins; and scattered jets of smoke, rising from heaps of *débris*, are the only indications of actual life. Formerly a bazaar crossed the town from the Kandahar gate to the Herat gate; but the few shops which remain are now congregated near the Herat gate, the sole industry of the people being the manufacture of gunpowder from saltpetre. This is collected from the numerous water-pits which go to make up the general character of the scene within the walls.

Between Farah and Kandahar there is the Bakwa plain, which is associated in the minds of the Afghans with a tradition that identifies it with the scene of some future battle between the Russian and British forces. The plain is a dead level stretch without trees or growth of any kind to vary its monotony, and it is to its western end that the scene of the prophecy refers. The usual version of the story mentions as a concluding detail that, after the fight, no less than 12,000 riderless horses will be found wandering over it.¹ The Afghans attach considerable belief to this prophecy which, according to Colonel Yate who went to the pains of unearthing its origin, may be attributed to a native of Kuchan, Shah Ni'-Amat Ulla Wani of Kirman, who died in the year 1400 at the age of ninety-seven, having attained considerable reputation as an author, philosopher, and sage.

From Farah to Girishk, situated on the Helmund River, is a distance of 150 miles. This river, which rises at Fazindaz in the western slopes of the Paghman Mountains, flows with a course generally southwest for over 600 miles, ultimately falling into the Seistan Lake. The first point about which any reliable information exists is at Gardan Diwar, about 40 miles from its source. It here runs along the north side of the Urt plateau at an elevation of 11,500 feet, about 12 yards wide, less than a foot in depth in winter, and with a brisk current; it is joined by a tributary, the Ab-i-Siah, coming from

¹ "Northern Afghanistan." Major C. E. Yate.

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the southern slopes of the Haji Khak Pass. In the summer this upper portion of the Helmund is a favourite resort of the pastoral tribes of the Eastern area. Thence it passes through a deep valley, hugging the south side of the Koh-i-Baba for 35 miles to Ghaoch Khol, its banks fringed with rose-bushes and osiers. At this point it is crossed by a bridge, unites with a rivulet from the north and with the Ab-Dilawar from the south-west. From this to Diwal Khol, about 25 miles farther, it pursues the same westerly direction which it has had from its source. A few miles beyond this point the stream gives a bold sweep to the south for 80 miles, as far as Chakmakehak. Here it is crossed by the road going west towards Herat and receives a considerable feeder from the north. The river then turns slightly to the south-west and keeps this direction for about 120 miles as far as Sakhir, where roads from Bamian, Maidan, and Girishk meet. From Sakhir to Girishk, a distance of perhaps 150 miles, its course is more south, and 25 miles below Sakhir it is joined from the east by the Tezin stream. At Garmab, 50 miles below this again, it is met by the Khudrud, where it is crossed 60 miles above Girishk. At this point the banks of the Helmund are 1000 yards apart; the right bank low and sandy and the left bank high and rocky. Sometimes when the volume of the river has diminished the breadth of the Helmund at Girishk itself is reduced to 300 yards; the stream flowing smoothly with a mean depth at the ford of 3 feet. In mid-

June, again, it is barely passable by infantry; but 3 miles up stream, where the river divides into three branches and the southern Herat-Kandahar road crosses, there is a ferry, in addition to several good fords. Here the depth is less than 4 feet and the breadth across each arm varies between 70 and 150 yards. About 45 miles below Girishk and just below Kala-i-Bist is an island formed by the river. It is joined on the left by its great tributary the Argand-ab, from which point its width varies between 300 and 400 yards, with an average depth of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 fathoms. Thence to Benadar Kalan, a distance of 70 miles, its direction is south and from this it turns west for 120 miles. At Pula-lak, 100 miles distant, it is usually 400 yards wide, very deep and flowing in a broad stretch of water as far as Traku. Here, its progress arrested by some sand-hills, it takes a sudden turn to the north-west and runs for 45 miles in that direction; finally it divides into the three branches, Rod-i-Seistan, Rod-i-Purian, and the Nad Ali. Since 1895 the Rod-i-Purian has been the main channel, displacing the Nad Ali course. The river, even in the dry season, is never without a plentiful supply of water.

The fort of Girishk stands on the right bank of the Helmund about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the stream upon the high road between Kandahar and Herat. Its position seems to have been determined by the neighbourhood of the fords across the Helmund; also by the vicinity of the ferry, which, when the river is not fordable, is usually established at a narrow

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part of the stream below the fort. From the far side of the river, Girishk appears to have more strength and to be in better order than inspection proves to be the case. Upon two sides and part of the third there is a ditch, which contains water but is formidable neither in width nor in depth. On the north and north-eastern aspects, where the wall is situated upon the high bank of the river, it is not continued.

Girishk, as also Farah, comes within the jurisdiction of the officials of Kandahar Province and a small garrison is detailed from Kandahar itself. Two squadrons of cavalry and one battery of field guns usually comprise the regular establishment, to which is added a certain militia strength. The soldiers camp outside the walls; the fort itself, which is only 700 feet in length and 250 feet in breadth, being the residence of the Governor of Pusht-i-Rud, the name by which the district goes. In no sense can the building be regarded as possessing any military value. The walls are weak and exposed from their parapet to their foundations. Moreover, there is cover close up to them on all sides except the northern where a ravine, which would afford an enemy protection, is enfiladed from the north-west tower. The setting of the fort is quite picturesque. In the low-river lands on the south side there are charming gardens, but their walls and trees are too likely to afford cover to troops to be other than a danger. In the fort itself are two gateways; one of which, a small one, has been blocked up. The main one is

at the southern extremity. There are four corner towers and the water-supply is reliable and drawn from the river. But, equally with Farah and Sabzawar, the fortifications of Girishk need not be the subject of any detailed consideration here. Standing on the main route from Herat to Kandahar, controlling the fords across the Helmund and commanding the road to Seistan from which it is only 190 miles distant, the richness of the surrounding region makes its early possession essential to any force operating from the Indo-Afghan border. Villages are numerous and every one is a thriving centre. The pasturage is both fattening and abundant, while the agricultural capacity of the Zamindawar lands is well known. During the last operations in Afghanistan 4,000,000 lbs. weight of grain were collected from the Girishk district by the British force that was then in occupation, a return which makes it the most important of any of the bases which might be established on the Perso-Afghan border.

Kandahar, which is 125 miles from Quetta and only 65 miles from the railhead at New Chaman, is the last place where an army advancing from Herat towards the Indus would halt. It also affords access to the Ghazni and Kabul roads through the Tarnak Valley, and its proximity to the deserts of Beloochistan on the south renders at least one of its flanks safe from being turned. It is very accessible from Persia in the west and from India in the east, while it has changed hands so frequently during the

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period of its history — Persians, Usbegs, Afghans, and in recent times the English — that a further change is certainly to be anticipated. Kandahar is situated between the Argand and Tarnak Rivers on a level plain covered with cultivation and well populated to the south and west; on the north-west a low ridge rises to the height of 1000 feet. The shape of the city is an irregular parallelogram, the length being from north to south with a circuit of 3 miles, 1006 yards. It is surrounded by a ditch, 24 feet wide and 10 feet deep, and by a wall which is $20\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick at the bottom, $14\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick at the top, and 27 feet in height. This wall is made of mud hardened by exposure to the sun and without revetment of stone or brick. The length of the western face is 1967 yards, of the eastern 1810 yards, of the southern 1345 yards, and of the northern 1164 yards. There are four main gates, through which run the principal streets and two minor gates. The Bar Durani and Kabul are on the eastern face, the Shikarpur on the southern face, the Herat and the Top Khana on the western face, and the Idgah on the northern face. The Bar Durani and the Top Khana are the minor gates.

The gateways are defended by six double bastions and the angles are protected by four large circular towers. The curtains between the bastions have fifty-four small bastions distributed along the faces. From the Herat gate a street runs to the Kabul gate through the city; commencing from the Shikarpur gate and crossing it at right angles near the



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centre, another leads to the citadel, which is square-built with walls 260 yards in length.

The citadel is situated to the north of the city and south of it is the Top Khana. West of this is the tomb of Ahmed Shah Durani, an octagonal structure, overlaid with coloured porcelain bricks and surmounted by a gilded dome, surrounded by small minarets. It towers above all the adjacent buildings and its dome attracts attention to the city from a distance. The pavement of the tomb is carpeted and an embroidered cloak is thrown over the sarcophagus. The sepulchre itself, composed of a coarse stone from the mountains near Kandahar, is inlaid with wreaths of flowers in coloured marble. Twelve lesser tombs, which are those of the children of Ahmed Shah, are ranged near the resting-place of the father. The interior walls are painted in designs similar to those which adorn the exterior, but the execution is more regular and the colours, having been less exposed, are fresher and more brilliant. The lofty dome above the centre imparts an air of grandeur to the little temple, while its windows of stone trellis work admit a subdued and pleasant light. The tomb is engraved with passages from the Koran and a copy of the sacred volume, from which the Mullahs recite passages, is kept in the sanctuary.

At the point where the streets from Herat gate and the Shikarpur gate meet, is the Charsu, a large dome 50 yards in diameter. Here, as in other parts of the city, are public "humams" or warm baths, where a course of Asiatic massage, including bath-

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as the population increases and diminishes, depending upon whether the local government were protective or oppressive. When Kandahar was visited by Elphinstone, he calculated its population at 100,000. Hough reported it at 80,000, Masson from 25,000 to 30,000, Ferrier 30,000, Court 25,000, and Bellew 15,500. Holdich, writing in 1880, put the strength of the Duranis, Ghilzais, Parsiwans, and Kakuris alone at 30,000. In recent years Kandahar has prospered. As there has been but little to disturb the development of its trade and the general settlement of the immediate vicinity, it is possible that it may have reached the present high figure.

As in most Asiatic cities the different trades occupy special parts of the Kandahar bazaars. In all there are 3700 shops in addition to the stalls of the way-side peddlars. These, their goods spread upon the ground or displayed upon small tables, not infrequently act as agents of the more important merchants. There are, too, certain street musicians and strolling players. The premises of the cloth merchants extend down the east side of the Shikarpur Bazaar; and facing them are the saddlers and the smiths. From the Charsu towards the Kabul gate, to the north of the Kabul Bazaar, are the Hindoo bankers. In the opposite direction, on the north of the Herat Bazaar, are the coppersmiths; and confronting them are the tailors and the shoemakers. At the north end of the Shahi Bazaar is the grass market, and next to it, on the north-east, the cattle market. The Shikarpur Bazaar is the popular and

central meeting-place; but each of the four principal streets of Kandahar is thronged between sunrise and sunset. Almost without cessation is the movement of the mass of people: some riding, many walking, others proceeding to and from the markets leading camels, driving ponies, or themselves carrying loads. Women are rarely seen; but from beyond the Indian border or from out of the heart of Afghanistan there are traders, travellers, and fakirs. Arrayed in various colours, though all assume the Afghan dress, they are only distinguished from each other by the forms of their head-dress. Their beards are black and bushy; but where age has made its appearance the white hairs are dyed red with the juice of the henna. A few are shaven and habited in jackets and trousers of blue linen or tunics of drab cloth with pendant sleeves, their heads being protected by cotton skull-caps. This latter type belongs usually to some trans-border region. Others wear cloaks made up in chintz or in the woollen cloth of the country, with turbans of very ample fold. The constant bustle of the streets produces considerable confusion around the stalls, while the shouts of the caravan leaders and the sickly whining of the street beggars add to the uproar. Mendicity is to be seen in its most loathsome and repulsive forms. The blind, the maimed, and deformed, ragged and unspeakably squalid men, women, and children not only stand and sit, but lie grovelling in the dust or mire under the feet of the crowd.

The Hindoos are the most numerous as well as

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the wealthiest merchants in the city. They carry on a very profitable trade with Bombay, *viâ* Shikarpur and Karachi. They import silks, calicoes, muslins, chintzes, merinoes, woollen and broad cloths, leather, iron, copper, knives, scissors, needles, thread, and paper from England; indigo, spices, sugar, medicines, salt from India; shawls, postins, shoes, opium, silks, and carpets from Meshed. Kandahar exports to India and the Persian Gulf madder, assafoetida, goat's-hair, camel's-wool, preserved fruits, quince seeds, pomegranate rinds, tobacco, felts, raw silk, rosaries; horses, baggage ponies, Biran carpets, copper utensils, and silk are contributed by Persia. The trade between Kandahar, Herat, and Meshed is conducted principally by Persians, who bring down silk, raw and manufactured, copper utensils, guns, daggers, swords, precious stones (turquoise), brocade, gold and silver braiding, horses and carpets; they take back wool, felts, postins, and skins.

Kandahar city is by far the most important trade centre in Afghanistan, the customs and town dues together equalling the land revenues of the province. These several sources of income, of course, go some way towards meeting the expenses of the Central Government. There are few manufactures or industries of importance that are peculiar to the city; the principal trade of a local description is the production of silk, felt, and rosaries of soft crystallised silicate of magnesia, which is found near the city. The description of these trades will be found in a further chapter.

Certain articles have been withdrawn from exportation by order of the Governor of Kandahar, but before this occurred the following taxes were levied: on wheat, barley, atta, and rice eight annas per donkey-load or one rupee per camel-load; ghee, 5 rupees per maund; oil was mulcted in a sixth part. The kidney-fat of every sheep or goat slaughtered is a Government perquisite and is sent to the Amir's soap manufactory, where it is made after the most economical principles into a coarse description of soap. Each shop pays a tax of one and a half Kandahari rupees *per mensem*. Saids, mullahs, and a few others are exempted.

The returns from taxes assessed on the various crafts give:

RS. PER ANNUM		RS. PER ANNUM	
Dyers	1500	Silk-weavers	3500
Tanners	4000	Gram-dealers	1250
Cap and postin-makers...	600	Capitation tax	3000
Butchers	700	Cattle markets	2500
Gaming houses ..		2500	

while bakers have to present annually to the Governor thirty Kandahari maunds of bread.

The Saids of Peshin, Kakuris, Bakhtiaris, and the Beloochis are the tribes principally engaged in horse dealing. This trade flourishes for six months in the year; but it is stagnant during the hot weather and in the winter, when the roads are closed by snow. About 2000 or 3000 horses are said to pass through the city annually. The chief breeding districts drawn on by these traders are Sarakhs, Maimana, Nur, and Kala Nau in the Hazara country; Daria

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Gaz and Kelati-i-Nadiri in Persia; Gulza and Firozkoh in Herat Province. Of these the horses from Sarakhs, Nur, and Gulza are most prized, realising locally between 60 and 120 rupees. An export duty between 15 to 30 rupees was originally levied against each animal. To escape this tax traders frequently took the desert routes, but the trade is now prohibited. The cows of Kandahar and Seistan are in general request; they are said to give twenty seers of milk each *per diem*, being milked three times in twenty-four hours. They fetch about 40 rupees each. Camels are anything but plentiful in the Kandahar district; and the supply is scarcely adequate to meet the demands of the trading population. Many are imported from Beloochistan, the prices varying from 20 to 100 rupees.

The Saids of Peshin and others formerly conducted a more or less profitable traffic in slaves in Western Afghanistan, some four or five hundred being sold annually in Kandahar. A few of these unfortunates were purchased in Seistan, but most of them were kidnapped from elsewhere. Slavery in Afghanistan, however, was abolished by Abdur Rahman in 1895, the Russian and India Governments mutually co-operating in its prevention. Very few slaves were Persian born, the several regions of Afghanistan supplying their own superfluous human beings. Hazara furnished a large quota, frequently in lieu of arrears of revenue or when there was difficulty in realising Government assignments against the different villages. The value of slaves fluctuated

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according to the price of food; during seasons of abundance high prices were obtained, but in any period of scarcity slaves were a drug in the market.

The climate of Kandahar is charming in the winter, but the spring is considered the most pleasant time. Barren parched hills lie close to the city on the north and west; the heat radiating from them is such that the winds are hot and parching. The temperature of the thermometer varies greatly between morning and the middle of the day — sometimes as much as 40 or 50 degrees.

In winter, composed of the months of December, January, and February, the weather is cloudy, with storms, snow, sleet, and rain. The wind varies between all the points of the compass, seldom for long blowing from one direction. Frosts are severe.

In spring, made up of the months of March, April, and May, the weather is fair but cloudy. Occasional rain falls; and there are thunder-storms during the first half of the season, in which also the nights are cold and very frosty. In the latter half of this quarter the weather becomes warmer, dews fall at night, and dust-storms occur infrequently. The wind is westerly and south-westerly, but high easterly winds prevail in March.

During the months of June, July, August, and part of September the hot season obtains, commencing about June 20 and continuing until September 20. It comprises two periods of forty days each, separated by an intervening fortnight of cloudy and cooler weather, during which thunder-storms occur

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in the mountains, though rain rarely falls on the plain. The most prevalent wind during the summer blows from the west during the day, but during the night and until the sun has been "up" a couple of hours it emanates from the opposite direction. Dust-storms are frequent and severe.

The wind, during the autumn in the evening and in the early morning, blows in warm unrefreshing gusts, heated by passing over the many bare rocky ranges which serve simply to reflect the sun. During these months, part of September, October, and November, the sun is still powerful. Occasional dust-storms occur, and there is cloudy weather towards the close of the season. The dews are heavy; little rain falls and high north-easterly and north-westerly winds prevail at the close of the season.

Of diseases that may be attributed to the Kandahar climate, the most prominent are intermittent and remittent fevers, whilst continued fevers and small-pox, although met with only in a sporadic form, are epidemic in certain seasons. The first-named maladies are prevalent throughout the year; although more active in the spring and autumn when they are remarkable for the frequency of the tertian form.

Ophthalmic complaints are numerous, although not altogether attributable to the climate. Rheumatism, neuralgic affections, scrofula, syphilis, and certain cerebral disturbances are common.

CHAPTER XII

SEISTAN

WESTWARDS of the Kandahar district is the region of Seistan, to which unusual political interest attaches. Roughly speaking, it is divided between Persia and Afghanistan, the Helmund River demarcating the mutual spheres of interest and occupation. Geographically, it belongs to the watershed of Afghanistan. Its extensive areas, situated along the borders of Afghanistan, Persia, and Beloochistan, are drained by the Hamun Lake, which also receives the waters of the Helmund, Farah, Khash, and Harud Rivers. The area of this depression, which is broken up into three subsidiary basins — those of the Farah, the Helmund, and the Zirreh — is 125,000 square miles. The first of these consists of the two-fold lagoon formed by the Harud and Farah Rivers flowing from the north, and by the Helmund and the Khash or Kushk Rud flowing from the south and east respectively. These are connected by a thick reed-bed called the Naizar, which, according to the amount of water that the lakes contain, is either a marsh or a cane-brake. In flood-time these waters, ordinarily distinct, unite to pour over the Naizar into

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the second great depression, known by the generic title of Hamun Lake. In times of abnormal flood the Hamun will itself overflow. On such occasions the water, draining southwards through the Sarshela ravine, inundates the third depression, which is known as the Gaud-i-Zirreh. The Hamun Lake, like the Gaud-i-Zirreh, is one of those seasonable phenomena which are invariably met in regions where the water system is irregular. At certain periods quite dry, at others it possesses a measurement of 100 miles in length, 15 miles in breadth, with a mean depth of 4 feet and a maximum of 10 feet. The waters of the Hamun are sweet. Fish are very plentiful, providing food for an aboriginal colony which frequents the lake. It is, also, the haunt of many varieties of wild geese, duck, and other water-fowl.

It is better, before proceeding to study further the value of Seistan, to describe exactly of what Seistan consists. Sir Frederic Goldsmid, for purposes of more accurate definition of the region, divided its areas into two parts: Seistan Proper and Outer Seistan. In this he may be said to have given Seistan Proper to Persia and Outer Seistan to Afghanistan. The former lies between the Naizar on the north and the main lateral canal, which waters the lands around Sekuha and the neighbouring villages on the south. It extends along the old bed of the Helmund, from a mile above the dam at Kohak, to its mouth on the east, and to the fringe of the Hamun and the Kuh-i-Khwajah on the west. The population numbers 45,000, of whom 10,000 were nomads of mixed

descent. Of the larger total, 20,000 are returned as Seistanis and 15,000 as Persian-speaking settlers, the average number of persons to the square mile being roughly 15 — figures which are eight times in excess of the proportional result found elsewhere in Persia. Outer Seistan comprises the country stretching along the right bank of the Helmund, from its lake mouth on the north to Rudbar in the south. The inhabitants are Seistanis, Beloochi nomads, and Afghans, together with a certain proportion of Sanjuranis and Joktis — the term Seistani applying particularly to that portion of the inhabitants possessing permanent settlements, irrespective of descent and nationality. The combined areas of the Seistan basin aggregate some 7006 square miles and the joint population is returned at 205,000, or 34 to the square mile.

It is the Helmund River, the chief tributary to the Hamun, that has been the greatest obstacle to the successful demarcation of the Seistan region. Hitherto the boundary defining the respective limits of the two States has been the one arranged in 1872 by the Goldsmid Award. Under that instrument a line was drawn from Siah-koh to where the then main bed of the Helmund River entered the Naizar swamp. The frontier then proceeded to Kohak. From this point it followed a south-westerly direction to Koh-i-Malik-i-Siah, thus leaving the two banks of the Helmund below Kohak to Afghanistan. Since then the Helmund has changed its course, and in that portion of the frontier which was affected by the

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vagaries of the stream, considerable confusion arose, while local Perso-Afghan relations became very much inflamed. The question as between the two races depended upon the future division of the new bed of the Helmund, the point of dispute dealing specifically with the divergence of the main stream from the channel which was selected as the frontier line by the Mission of 1872. The Afghans, who were the principal gainers by the alteration of the course of the river, claimed that the new bed formed the frontier: the Persians, on the other hand, endeavoured to maintain the strict interpretation of the old agreement.

Unfortunately Seistan possessed interest for others than those who were dependent upon the course of the Helmund, and Russia had already secured the Shah's assent to the appointment of a Russian consul at Nasratabad. As soon as the dispute promised local unpleasantness between Persia and Afghanistan and political difficulties for Great Britain with Teheran, this individual, M. Miller, interfered. Exclaiming against the presumption of the Afghans, he offered to provide a force to resist their so-called aggression. Before matters had reached the crisis which would have made Russian interference possible, the Shah, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Paris, requested the British Government to arbitrate on the question of the Helmund waters and, at the same time, to establish a permanent boundary line in place of the vague provisions made by the Goldsmid Mission.

In agreeable accord with this request the Imperial Government at the end of 1902 appointed as British Commissioner, Major McMahon, who had already demarcated the whole of the southern boundary of Afghanistan — a distance of 800 miles. It so happened that his new duties commenced at Koh-i-Malik-i-Siah, the point at which his former work finished. The mission consisted of 11 British officers, numerous survey and irrigation experts, an escort of 200 native infantry, 60 cavalry, with a large supply of transport, including the 58th Camel Corps — in all a total of 1500 men, 200 horses, and 2200 camels. As the base was at Quetta, 500 miles across an almost waterless desert, whence all stores except grain and fodder and a few local commodities had to be imported, the task of feeding the missions can be well appreciated. Starting from Quetta, the mission proceeded through Afghan territory to Khwaja-ali on the Helmund and then followed the river, with the object of commencing work in the middle of the boundary. This march of 500 miles over uninhabited waterless country occupied five weeks. The temperature was very low, with the thermometer at four degrees above zero; and frightful blizzards were encountered. During this period three men were frozen to death and a number of animals lost. On reaching Seistan, Colonel McMahon was met by the Afghan Commissioner and by two Persian Commissioners, each with a large escort. The Amir, who was known personally to the British Commissioner, kindly despatched from Kandahar for

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his private protection a force of 100 cavalry and 200 infantry.

Political difficulties for the mission commenced at the very outset. Attempting to cross into Persian Seistan it was refused admission by the Persians, who had been thoroughly frightened by Russian misrepresentation as to its object. The cool assertion was made that no boundary was in dispute, and that any attempt to pass into Persian territory would be met by force. For a whole month the mission contented itself with travelling along the Afghan side of the Helmund, collecting information in regard to the frontier line. Throughout this time there was no meeting with the Persian officials. Further work at last necessitated an entry into Persian territory. Notwithstanding Persia's protests and her objection to the erection of a bridge for the purpose of crossing the Helmund, the mission crossed, receiving the customary compliments and being welcomed with bands and guards of honour.

The actual work of demarcation was very difficult. South of the Helmund for 90 miles the line lay through an arid desert where water was brought from long distances. North of this section the boundary traversed country liable to inundation in which pillars of a massive permanent nature had to be erected, while the last 20 miles of the frontier ran up the waterless, glacial slopes of the Siah-koh. By the decision agreed upon, the old bed of the Helmund was retained as the new frontier, the present boundary being so fixed that it continues irrespective

of further changes in the course of the river. This arrangement reconstitutes the 1872 line. Considerable delay marked its acceptance both in Kabul and Teheran, the findings being delivered in April, 1904. Demarcation work, proceeding in accordance with McMahon's report, was not completed until the close of 1904, by which time Persian objections to the decision upon the boundary had been overcome, the first part of the work of the mission being settled absolutely when the final adhesion of the two Governments to the verdict of the mission was notified in September, 1904. The appropriation of the Helmund waters between Persia and Afghanistan was the second part of the business of the mission. The difficulties of the question were increased by Russian exertions to thwart a satisfactory solution. Nevertheless, after most scrupulous pains and exhaustive inquiries into existing rights and practice, the Commissioners' award upon partition of the waters was handed, in May, 1905, to the Persian and Afghan representatives for communication to their respective Governments. The Amir of Afghanistan at once accepted the judgment of Colonel McMahon while the people on the spot also warmly espoused the settlement. But Persia, inspired by the laboured concoctions of the Russian officials in Teheran, refused to ratify the protocol and, after great delay, confirmed her dissatisfaction at the distribution of the waters by direct representations to the British Minister at Teheran. Unhappily on February 26, 1906, in spite of previous official intimations from the

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Foreign Office that Persia had acquiesced in the results of the mission, the Shah's Government formally notified Sir Edward Grey of its inability to accept and consequent rejection of the decision in respect of the McMahon division of the waters of the Helmund. In a similar manner, Persia appealed against the decision of the Goldsmid Mission with the result that its original terms were confirmed. No genuine objection exists in this instance.

The trials of the mission in Seistan were of a distinctly unpleasant order. During the winter 1904-1905 the jackals, with which the district abounds, for some unknown cause went mad, attacking men and animals. Four members of the mission were bitten, one of whom died of hydrophobia. The disease also spread to the wolves, who played great havoc. One wild night, March 25, 1905, during a blizzard blowing at a velocity of 88 miles an hour, two mad wolves raided the lines of the Camel Corps and worried seventy-eight camels and one horse. Forty-eight of the camels and the horse died of hydrophobia. On another occasion a horde of these creatures tried unsuccessfully to rush the main camp. The Seistanis themselves were so overcome by terror that they actually killed off all but a few of their dogs on whom they depend for safety and security at night.

One of the most tragic experiences was the death of an Indian surveyor while on duty in the waterless Dasht-i-Margo. He ventured too far from water and, owing to the intense heat, was unable either to move forward or to retrace his steps. He and seven

of his followers paid the penalty with their lives. This incident was marked by the heroism of one of his men who, seeing the surveyor die, determined to rescue the map, to secure which so many lives had been given. He cut it off from the board of the plane table, and, knowing that he could not long retain consciousness, wound it under his waistcloth round his body. Then he blindly started northward in the hope of reaching water. The four men who commenced this journey with him collapsed, he himself remembers no more than regaining consciousness at night-time lying by a pool in the Krash River. Here he was found by a wandering Afghan, who carried him on his back to a native village where, after receiving careful attention, his life was saved. The bodies of his unfortunate companions were subsequently discovered in a completely mummified condition.

Seistan resembles other parts of Central Asia and almost every centre of importance in Afghanistan, insomuch that its existence depends upon irrigation. The canals which branch off from the Helmund, bearing the waters of that river throughout the heart of the country, date back to a period which itself is long prior to either Persian or Afghan conquest. The systems in vogue to-day are hardly an improvement upon those earlier waterworks; there is no doubt that the region might be made the centre of an exceptionally fertile oasis if there were any enduring qualities in the local government, security for trade, or opening for agricultural activity. Life in Seistan

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does not entail elaborate preparations. Provisions are cheap; and sheep and oxen are abundant. Rice comes from Herat, vegetables are scarce, while wheat and barley may be purchased in large quantities.

The feature of Seistan is the Helmund. Indeed, this region is as dependent upon the Helmund as Egypt is upon the Nile, and in recent years agricultural conditions have much improved. The gross revenue is now 100,000 kharwars of grain, with an additional 7100 tomans as the value of other products. Of this latter return the Amir of Seistan takes one-fifth, 1420 tomans; with levies upon forage and firewood from each village and the proceeds from the sales of permits to collect taxes on cows and sheep, the cash revenue amounts to 14,095 tomans. The tax on cows is $2\frac{1}{2}$ krans per 100 cows, and the impost on sheep 1 kran for 20 sheep. There is no levy on ploughing bullocks. Of the 100,000 kharwars of grain the Amir receives 30,000 kharwars at the value of 5 tomans per kharwar. The net receipts are, therefore, 164,095, of which the Persian Government require 2600 tomans in cash and 24,012 kharwars in grain, of which 9812 kharwars are remitted in allowances to officials, priests, and troops. In place of the payment in grain, too, the Persian Government usually accepts a cash equivalent at the rate of 7 krans per kharwar, 9940 tomans, the aggregate cash payment contributed by Seistan to Teheran amounting to 12,540 tomans, or £2500.

The capital of Seistan is divided into two sections — northern and southern; although so long the cen-

tre of local government, it reflects at first a somewhat cheerless and dilapidated appearance. The absence of roads about the city and the generally neglected condition of Husseinabad, the southern town, set up a feeling of disappointment in those who see the place for the first time. Beyond these two towns have sprung up in the last few years the neat buildings of the British Consulate, which may be said to constitute a third part of the capital, with Captain Macpherson in charge of Anglo-Indian interests. Separated from the rest of the city by a broad stretch of level ground, some acres in extent, it occupies an admirable site and has the advantage of room for extension, should it, at any time, be thought advisable to embark upon enlargement. Between two rows of buildings is a wide space, more nearly a square than a street, at the end of which the Union Jack flies. Behind the main block on the south side of the square is a mosque. The principal premises cover a space of about 150 yards by 70 yards, the whole site consisting roughly of about 13 acres. Alongside the consulate stand the imposing premises of the British bank, a branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia, comprising several excellent houses and a well-kept garden.

Husseinabad is little more than a collection of small-domed mud-houses, built, irrespective of ground plan, wheresoever fancy dictated and placed in the middle of a vast plain. Here and there a wind-mill of curious shape — usually stationary in the winter months, but wanting only the fierce blasts

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of the *Bad-i-sad-o-bist roz* or wind of 120 days, which blows unceasingly in the summer months, to rouse it to a state of wild activity — stands conspicuously among the surrounding houses. Beyond this the residences of the Russian Consul and the Chief Mullah are the only other objects likely to attract attention. The former, no longer the largest house in the town, is also badly situated, being enclosed on three sides by houses and on the fourth by a graveyard, which stretches from the Consulate to the walls of Nasratabad. The Russian Consulate itself, a rectangular building enclosing two courtyards opening into one another, has been, in reality, converted from native houses. It rejoices in an upper storey; a cluster of domes — each room possessing a separate dome — forms the roof, above which stands a sorry-looking flag-staff.

Nasratabad, the northern town, though in itself insignificant, is by far the more imposing half. It is surrounded by walls 30 feet in height, about 350 yards in length from north to south and 400 yards from east to west, with buttresses at intervals of about 40 yards. An additional rectangular enclosure projecting from the north-east corner contains the arc or citadel, in which is situated the palace of the Amir. In the centre of the southern wall, supported on either side by buttresses, stands one of the two gateways of the city. From here the central street traverses the length of the city, terminating in a similar gateway in the centre of the north wall. Running all round is a projected way which is loop-

holed; there is also a deep ditch, sometimes filled with water. The place possesses from fifty to one hundred shops; with one exception they are insignificant and mainly occupied by soldiers who, during their term of service in Seistan, devote themselves to trade and are scarcely ever taken away from the fort. The open spaces in the city have been cultivated, and little patches of grain may occasionally be seen. As is always the case with Persian towns donkeys are everywhere to the fore.

Nasratabad is garrisoned by two Kain regiments,¹ one of which is disbanded at home, while the other supplies shopkeepers to the capital in the intervals of military duties. The nominal strength is 1000, but less than 800 men are mobilised. They are armed with the useless jezail, although at Birjand there is a store of Werndl rifles; they are supposed to receive a new uniform every second year. Service is for life and is hereditary in the families supplying the soldiers. Their pay is twenty krans — twelve shillings — and seven and one-half mans of wheat yearly; on service in Seistan they are given rations. As may be supposed, they do not constitute a formidable body of fighting men. In addition to the infantry there are twenty gunners hailing from Tabriz, who hold a position of which they take the fullest advantage. They carry on the business of money-lenders, charging 500 per cent. as a minimum!

It has long been recognised in Seistan that, while

¹ "Khurasan and Sistan." Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Yate.

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Indian commerce can achieve no compensating return in the markets of Khorassan against the trade of Russia and a dam of prohibitory tariffs blocks any little trickle from India entering Central Asia, something might be gained by concentrating attention upon Seistan itself. Accordingly, when in 1896 the laying-out of a route between Nushki and Nasratabad was begun and the construction of a railway between Quetta and Nushki was mooted, two important steps in the right direction were indicated. The distance from Quetta to Nasratabad along the route which was adopted is 565 miles. The five stages out of Quetta down to Nushki, a distance of 93 miles, pass through mountainous country. The road descends 2564 feet from the Quetta plateau to the great tableland which stretches away to Seistan at a height of 3000 feet. Across it lies the track, fairly level and admirably adapted for the passage of caravans. The hills tower in rough fantastic forms along the road to Nushki, and in crossing from valley to valley vistas of the mountain scenery of Beloochistan open out in constant succession. The altitude of the country above the sea and the dry bracing atmosphere create, in winter, a pleasant feeling of exhilaration. The heat in summer is intense, but the temperature varies between the extremes of heat and cold.

The hills are the great feature of Quetta. To the east, within a mile or two of the bazaar, the Mar-dar Range rises to a height of 11,000 feet, forming a splendid background to the cantonment. To the

north, west, and south the plain stretches out to the foot of the Zarghim, Tuckatoo, and Chiltan Hills. Bare and rugged are their slopes, for the juniper groves are tucked away in clefts on the hill-sides. Chill and forbidding are their summits, save at sunset when they flush scarlet as sin; then deepening gradually to purple pale to amethyst as twilight falls. As the night darkens, too, the fires of the charcoal-burners in the juniper valleys flash out, and the lowing of cattle from a distant bazaar reverberates in the still air. The atmosphere is very clear and distances are most deceptive. Dust-storms are frequent and the tiny dust-devil may be seen across the plain twirling rapidly in the radiant sunlight. Near Quetta there are a few mud-walled villages. They contain mostly a mixed population, the Beloochis proper being nomads and living in black blanket-tents. Even of these there are very few except at harvest time, when beside every threshing-floor, dotted amongst the golden mounds of *bhusa*, are ragged shelters. Each tent is composed simply of a couple of coarse goat's-hair blankets stretched, one to the windward and one overhead, across some forked sticks. Inside swarm a mass of men, women, and children. The women wear long-sleeved, red cotton shirts reaching to the ankles, full cotton trousers and *chaddas* of indigo blue cotton. They do not appear to veil themselves among their own people; upon the approach of the white man a corner of the *chadda* is caught quickly across the mouth. The *chadda* falls straight down from the crown of the head to the heels

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and the frayed, soil-worn tail is left to drag among the dust heaps. The long black tresses of the women are thickly plaited and ornamented with blue beads and white cowries. Sometimes a mass of coins is worn like a fringe over the forehead. Their shirts are finely worked in green and gold on the hems, at the sleeves, neck, skirt, and down the opening at the throat with the Russian cross stitch.

The Beloochi is a wild-looking man with long, black, well-oiled locks, which he keeps hanging in heavy curls round his neck and shoulders. He wears flowing cotton trousers, a cotton shirt, a waistcoat, and a variety of coats according to his means. His apparel is of the dirtiest and his bare feet are thrust into heavy ammunition boots with never a lace in them. In spite of certain defects in his attire, he is a very dignified-looking man and a born leader — of camels! Moreover, he does not set too high value upon his women-folk; labour is divided, and in ploughing his wife and a camel are usually harnessed together. The price of a spouse is calculated in so many goats, sheep, donkeys, or camels.

From Quetta a good driving road runs as far as Samungli, 8 miles distant, where there is a small caravansary. From this point a *kutch*a road bears off south-west circling round the northern foot of Chiltan in the valley of Girdi Tallao, near the middle of which is the next halting-place. Here there is a caravansary built in the Persian fashion — a square courtyard with lean-tos for cattle and camel-men and in one corner quarters, consisting of a mud *rez-de-*

chaussée and a wooden *chappar khaneh*, for travellers of a better class.

From Girdi Tallao the road proceeds to Tilleri through a cultivated valley, always bordered by the bare hills. At Tilleri there is another rest-house built on the same pattern, but possessing the luxury of windows in the lower storey. After leaving Tilleri the road is level for the first few miles as far as the Sherinab stream. It then rises gradually for the ascent of the Barak Pass, where there is a litter of rubble and stones and the ground is very much broken. Beyond the pass, in the vicinity of Murad Khan Killah, the valley spreads out to a level plain with sandy, well-cultivated soil — for Beloochistan. Up to this point in this stage there is not a vestige of a tree nor yet a camel-thorn bush; even the water is brackish. Moreover, signs of agricultural activity do not continue. Soon after leaving Murad Khan the route lies across stony, uneven ground until the Kishingi Valley is reached. Here the soil is once more sandy; camel-thorn abounds, and in spring there is the glow of crimson tulips. Beyond Kishingi the road descends into the Nushki plain by a long steep pass.

It has not been possible for Nushki to avoid the prosperity which follows in the train of the caravan. At the present moment it is an active but unfortunate settlement. Built at the foot of the hills which bound it on the north and only two or three miles from the range separating it from Kishingi, the winds from the west, sweeping along the plain to the hills and then eddying back again carrying clouds of dust,

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catch Nushki both ways. Although very seriously exposed and lying on the edge of the desert which stretches away westwards to the Helmund, there are evidences in the country around of attempts at agriculture. Irrigation is practised and the trickle of water from the Kaisar stream has been augmented by the careful sinking of wells, until the present state of Nushki is in near relation with that which seems to have existed many generations ago. On the top of a low spur of hills which runs south across the valley, where was once a Beloochi fort, now stands an ugly mud-coloured, flat-roofed bungalow, the travellers' rest-house. The hill on which it is built is very stony and absolutely bare of vegetation. On its southern aspect is a pebbly water-course into which the water, after running close to the bazaar and supplying two cattle-fords, dribbles scantily. The water-course is a favourite place for the disposal of dead camels and donkeys; while the unwholesome little river, the germ-bearer of many maladies, serves to turn three rather primitive water-wheels for the grinding of wheat and barley. In the clay soil along the edges of the stream myriads of tiny mauve irises grow during spring, with here and there scarlet and yellow tulips.

The bazaar is somewhat uninteresting, for it has been built by a British officer in uncompromisingly straight lines. Of course it is all made of mud; the roofs are flat and there are no balconies or verandahs because wood is scarce. So also there are no white Hindoo temples and shady peepul trees, no domed

mosques and stately arched gateways, no strings of chillies strung across the shop fronts crimsoning in the sun. There is no touch of colour anywhere; even the people seem to be clad in dirty white or dusty indigo-blue.

A wide street leads through the centre of the bazaar, and upon it are set two rows of one-storey mud-shops. Nearly all belong to Hindoo bunnias from Shikarpur. Their effects are chiefly sacks of grain and Manchester cotton goods, a few native-made long overcoats, waistcoats brodered with gold or silver thread, and the peaked Afghan kullah or semi-conical cap, worn in the centre of the puggaree. At the end of this thoroughfare are the police lines, post office, and some attempts at a military cantonment in which the local levy is quartered. The population is liable to fluctuation. Three years ago there were 250 people and rather more than 200 houses, of which 120 were shops; but any estimates to-day would need to be much greater, as the numbers of the population have doubled. This increase is due primarily to the growing popularity of the Nushki-Seistan route and an influx of people who were concerned in the construction of the Quetta-Nushki Railway. The completion of this work, which was opened to traffic on November 15, 1905, when a tri-weekly service was initiated, will probably cause the abandonment of the present position which Nushki occupies. The soil there has been infected by epidemics of cholera, and enteric fever is endemic among the villagers.

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The actual terminus of the line has been placed 10 miles farther on in the open valley, where there is both water and a better situation. There is little doubt that ultimately the preference of the caravans and the merchants will be given to the spot where the station premises are already located.

Work upon the railway began in the summer of 1902, when the difficulties which it presented were not formidable. The cost of construction has been but little more than half a million sterling. The line, which is 83 miles in length, branches off from the North-Western Railway to Quetta above the Bolan Pass, 3 miles from Shezand station and 12 miles short of Quetta itself, at a height of 5864 feet. The stations constructed on the line are very well appointed, far better than those upon the Bolan or Humai systems. They reflect the greatest credit on the engineers.

In general, Mr. Woodside may be congratulated upon the successful termination of his labours. Certain features in the construction are novel and create a somewhat daring precedent, as bridges have been built only over the large streams. Across the smaller streams the line runs, so that in heavy storms it may be washed away and the service dislocated. The experiment may prove troublesome, and it will be interesting to see how the system answers; with small traffic it may be a success. For a long time there will be little traffic beyond the Mastang district, although there is likely to be a large trade from there during the hot weather. The investigations of the

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engineers have proved that in all the valleys water is everywhere within practicable distance, under 150 feet generally. Where there was desolation before, and where it was not believed possible to find water, plentiful springs have been tapped.

Splendid work has been done by two young engineers, fresh from Scotland, Mr. Slee and Mr. Young. In two years or less these young men have learned the languages generally spoken by the workmen, and in dealing with the tribesmen, who numbered some thousands, they have had neither difficulty nor opposition. Their lives cannot be said to have been lonely. Day and night they were busy, orders or instructions being incessantly solicited, while their words were law in settling the disputes that so frequently arose between the tribesmen.

With the advent of the railway to Nushki, that place now becomes the starting-point of the great Indo-Perso overland caravan route. Prior to 1896, the existence of certain questions of a political nature prevented any definite steps being taken towards the construction of a trade-way between Seistan and Nushki. The Amir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman, whose fiscal policy was well calculated to stifle trade, was in occupation of the Chageh district, through which lay the direct route from Nushki to Seistan. It was eminently desirable that a change should be effected in the ownership of this district. In accordance with the Agreement of 1893, drawn up between Sir Mortimer Durand and Abdur Rahman, the Chageh district was assigned to the British sphere. In

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the following years, 1894–1896, a Boundary Commission under Captain McMahon occupied itself in demarcating the frontier of Afghanistan south of the Helmund and up to Koh-i-Malik-i-Siah; in 1895, by agreement with the Shah, a second Commission under Colonel Holdich proceeded to define the Perso-Beloochi frontier between Kohak and Koh-i-Malik-i-Siah — a distance of 300 miles. So soon as these two missions had completed their labours Captain Webb Ware was appointed the Assistant Political Officer and was placed in charge of the stretch of country which had accrued to the Government of India as the result of the demarcation, Major Trench proceeding to Seistan. Captain Webb Ware at once set himself to work upon plans for the creation of a trade route between Seistan and Nushki, the good fortune which had attended his earlier efforts being carried a stage further in 1900, when the interests of the Khan of Kelat in the Nushki district were bought out at a perpetual quit-rent of 9000 rupees per annum. Success has been pronounced; and both the character and complexion of this barren region have been transformed. No more difficult country could have been found for development. In the days before the road was started the region was the home of roving parties of Beloochi and Afghan ruffians, who periodically sallied forth to plunder passing caravans. Further, heat, the absence of water, and the dangers of the journey to India over long desert stretches militated against its adoption. Only at rare intervals did a caravan attempt the venture.

These defects are now, in the main, surmounted, and an excellent trade route is established between Nushki and Nasratabad, the marches being divided into twenty-one stages. Between Nushki and Robat a *kutch*a road, varying in breadth between 10 feet and 20 feet, is laid out. Dâk bungalows have also been established at regularly appointed stations and telegraphic communications exist. Around the several bungalows there are now tiny settlements where itinerant traders exist on the proceeds of their business with the caravans. Marauding bands have ceased to worry, as their leaders have been made responsible for the safe custody of travellers between the different stages. At each post there is a small levy-guard and quarters for the camel-dâk, which carries the mail between India and Seistan in nine and a half days. Although it is impossible to avoid the heat, the water difficulty is no longer insuperable. Wells have been sunk and, since the abolition of all tolls and duties on the route — which wise precaution was made an essential preliminary to the inauguration of the service — an increasing stream of camels pass to and fro, between India and Khorassan.

The road follows two sides of a triangle, skirting the whole of Southern Afghanistan before entering Persia at Koh-i-Malik-i-Siah. The distance from Nushki to Koh-i-Malik-i-Siah and thence direct to Meshed is just 1000 miles. To aid traders using this route a rebate of seven-eighths of the Indian customs duty is allowed. As the sea is free to Bunder Abbas,

this concession should be increased so that the starting-points of the caravans — *i.e.*, Nushki and Bunder Abbas — might be on a footing of equality. “Drawbacks” of 33 per cent. are granted by the North-Western Railway on all goods sent by it and destined for Persia. Additional facilities have also been arranged for the trade using this new route; in order to avoid the difficulty of having to go 150 miles out of their way to Nasratabad for customs examinations, hitherto experienced by merchants proceeding by the Nushki route to Khorassan, a first-class Customs Bureau has been established at Koh-i-Malik-i-Siah. This enables *kafilas* to proceed direct to Kain and Khorassan *viâ* the Palankoh route and to avoid the *détour* through Seistan. Furthermore, a British Consular Agent has been deputed to Koh-i-Malik-i-Siah, one of whose principal duties it will be to watch the interests of British traders using the route and to assist them in their dealings with the Customs authorities. As regards traffic, since the opening of the Quetta-Nushki Railway a considerable flow of trade has set in from the Helmund direction *viâ* Chagch, as caravans for Herat and Afghan traders naturally prefer to follow the Helmund to a point north-west of Chagch and then to turn southwards. A stretch of desert still has to be crossed; but it is less in extent than that between Nushki and the Persian frontier at Robat.

In order to encourage traders a revised schedule of rates for the hire of camels along the Nushki-Seistan-Meshed route has been issued by the Gov-

ernment of India. By these changes the hire for single camels carrying 400 pounds has been reduced from 57 rs. 8 a. for the single journey to 55 rs.; for the double journey from 100 to 95 rs., the time having been decreased from 105 to 85 days: this latter is a distinct advance. The charge per kharwar has been reduced from 370 krans to 359 krans 11 shahis, or 89 rs. 6 a. This concession does not yet equal the average rate of hire from Bunder Abbas to Meshed, which is 300 krans per kharwar. Goods must be packed in gunny bags, boxes, or leather cases, no package weighing more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ maunds. Special rates are quoted for wood-work and iron materials. The periods allowed for the journeys are:

Quetta to Seistan.....	45 days
Seistan to Meshed	40 "
Nushki to Seistan	38 "

Contractors will be held responsible for all loss and damage to goods in transit obviously due to the neglect of the camel-men. They will be at liberty to refuse goods for delivery if they are not properly packed and secured. Loss through raids will be considered beyond the contractors' responsibility. Ten days' notice must be given for any number of camels required up to 40, 25 days for over 50 and up to 300, 50 days above 300 but not exceeding 1000. Express camels can be hired at higher rates, the journey from Quetta to Seistan being then made in 30 days.

The evident success of the new route has been the more remarkable because M. Naus, the head of the

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Belgian administration that conducts the Persian Customs, has devised special means to check the expansion of Indian trade, two Customs officers being appointed to Nasratabad to deal with it. To give zest to their existence these men imposed many novel regulations upon caravans. The camel-men are fined for the non-observance of arbitrary rules which are purposely varied so that confusion may be created; the men are thrown into prison, the animals seized, and the goods confiscated. In addition, the Customs barrier in Seistan is reinforced by a plague cordon between Seistan and Khorassan against caravans from India, in spite of the fact that the period of any possible incubation has expired long before a caravan from Quetta can reach Seistan, and that the limits of time, within which quarantine is permissible, have been laid down by the decision of the Venice Sanitary Congress. The headquarters of this latest pest are at Turbat-i-Haidari and Karez. Meanwhile the Russian and Belgian authorities encourage the circulation of alarmist rumours about the mortality from Indian plague in Seistan, the doctor at the Russian legation in Teheran recently having spread a statement that 99 per cent. of deaths from plague had occurred in the Naizar district of Seistan. While these reports are very greatly exaggerated in respect of Indian plague, an epidemic of this disease nevertheless ravaged Seistan during the spring of 1906. At Nasratabad the population was reduced through it from 2500 to rather more than 300. The efforts of Dr. Kelly, the medical officer

attached to the British Consulate in Nasratabad, however, did much to arrest it, over 500 inoculations having been made and an excellent impression created by the recovery of a man who had been seized after being inoculated by him. Nonetheless, its existence prepares the way for more vigorous precautions against Indian caravans, the measures of the plague officials being directed against the development of Indian commercial relations with Northern Persia and Northern Afghanistan in the hope that Persian and Afghan merchants may frequent the Meshed emporium. At the present moment these preventive measures have achieved conspicuous success, and Russian commercial activity has entirely subjugated Khorassan Province. No headway appears to be possible for British trade; while the rapid growth of Russian commercial influence, under this system of pernicious assistance, threatens to reduce Seistan to the position of a commercial base from which the markets of India can be attacked by articles of Russian manufacture. A precisely similar state of things prevails at Meshed in respect of Afghanistan.

CHAPTER XIII

PROVINCES AND RACES

AFGHANISTAN to-day is divided into five major provinces — Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Afghan Turkestan, and Badakshan; and two territories — Kafiristan and Wakhan. Kandahar includes Seistan and the basin of the Helmund; Herat the basin of the Hari-Rud and north-western Afghanistan; Afghan Turkestan the former khanates, Andkhui, Maimana, Balkh, and Khulm; the province of Badakshan administers the territory of Wakhan and the regions of the Upper Oxus. Kabul, Herat, and Kandahar are the centres of their respective provinces; Tashkurgan and Mazar-i-Sharif of Afghan Turkestan; and Faizabad of Badakshan.

The province of Kabul is bounded on the north-west by the Koh-i-Baba, north by the Hindu Kush, north-east by the Panjsher River, and on the east by Jagdalik. In the south its limits are defined by the Sufed Koh and Ghazni; to the west by the hill country of the Hazaras, while its area of administration includes Bamian and Haibak. The province is very mountainous, but it contains also a large portion of arable lands which, lying along the base of the hills, derive much of their richness from the offscourings of the mountain faces.

Wheat and barley are the chief products, these grains constituting the staple food of the poorest classes. Nonetheless, the crops are not sufficient for the needs of the province and the demands of an inter-provincial export trade, which exists in a flourishing condition. Cereals are imported from Ghazni and rice from Upper Bangash, Jelalabad, Lughman, and even Kunar. In bad years, when prices rule high, corn is obtained from Bamian, which is also the chief centre for supplies of ghee. The Hazara country and the Ghilzai region are active competitors with Bamian in this trade. Agriculture and pastoral pursuits in the main attract the sole energies of the countryside; the most important pasturage existing in Logar. Grass is plentiful in the Kabul Valley and also towards Ghorband, while agricultural development is greatest in the Butkhak district. Water is abundant and every land-owner devotes considerable attention to fruit culture. A large porportion of the population in the Kabul Province live in tents during the summer months. The villages are of various sizes and usually number 150 families. As a rule the villages are not fortified; but each contains a small guard-tower from where a watch is kept over the villages, fields, and flocks. Sheep are maintained for purposes of breeding, but bullocks, camels, mules, and horses are employed in transport — trading between Turkestan, India, and Khorassan. Bullocks are made use of within the precincts of the Kabul Valley; camels between Kabul Province, Khorassan, and Turkes-

tan; mules and ponies between the province and the Hazara country.

The province of Badakshan lies in the extreme east of Afghanistan. It is bounded on the north and the east by the course of the Oxus, south by the crests of the Hindu Kush as far as the junction of the Hindu Kush with the Mustagh and Sarikol Ranges, west by a line which crosses the Turkestan plain southwards from the junction of the Kunduz River with the Oxus, from which point it proceeds ultimately to strike the Hindu Kush. The principal sub-divisions of Badakshan are: on the west, Rustak, Kataghan, Ghorī, Narin, and Anderab; on the north, Darwaz, Ragh, and Shiwa; on the east, Gharan, Ishkashim, Zebak, and Wakhan; elsewhere, Faizabad, Farkhar, Minjan, and Kishm. Numerous lofty mountain ranges and deep rugged valleys, wherein there is no little agricultural development, define its physiography, while ethnographically the bulk of the people of the province are Tajik.

In winter the climate is severe, the mountain passes being blocked by snow and the rivers frozen. In general it appears somewhat diversified and in the loftier parts of the province the agricultural seasons are frequently ruined by early frost. The chief industrial centres of the region are situated in the more temperate zones where the valleys are sheltered by the orological development. The rainfall, by reason of the stimulating influence of the forests, is abundant, especially in March and April. With the end of April a period of drought, continuing through-

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out May, June, July, and in a lesser degree in the months of August, September, and October, begins. Snow makes its appearance in November, but the heavier falls do not begin until the middle of December.

The principal industry of Badakshan is agricultural; but there is also considerable mineral wealth, while salt deposits and sulphur mines are known to exist and in some measure have been exploited. Salt and sulphur are found in the valley of the Kokcha; iron exists near Faizabad, while the ruby mines, for which the province has been celebrated, and the lapis-lazuli mines are found respectively on the right bank of the Oxus close to Ishkashim, in Gharan, and near the sources of the Kokcha. The ruby mines lie some 1200 feet above the Oxus River; but the deposits are not worked regularly, although from time to time in the reign of Abdur Rahman projects for developing them were initiated.

The alpine territory of Wakhan lies in the extreme north-east. It consists of two upland valleys which are traversed by the Panka. These are hemmed in on either side by lofty mountains; those to the south form the northern section of the Hindu Kush, here crossed by very difficult passes, the easiest of which is the Baroghil (12,000 feet) leading to Chitral and Gilgit. The chief resources of the people are derived from their flocks of sheep and droves of Tibetan yak. Wakhan is too elevated and sterile for tillage, but it yields a pasturage like that of the Pamir region. In this alpine district the lowest hamlet is 8000 feet;

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Sarhad, the highest, is no less than 11,000 feet above the sea. Nevertheless, pulse and barley crops are grown in the more sheltered glens.

As a province Afghan Turkestan ranks among the most important in the State. Before its division at the hands of Abdur Rahman it embraced much of the territory which he apportioned to the province of Badakshan, including every important khanate contained within the Oxus region. If now, when Afghanistan has been reduced to order and a settled system of administration has given place to the authority of the Khans, its revenues are less than others, its position is equal to Herat and Kandahar. In importance it has ranked hitherto with the capital province and contained the divisions of Maimana, Andkhui, Balkh, and Khulm, together with a number of so-called industrial centres, including Tashkurgan, a commercial market and Mazar-i-Sharif. The limits of the province include the southern half of the Oxus basin from the frontier of Badakshan on the east to the upper waters of the Murghab on the west. The Oxus forms the northern border from the confluence of the Kokcha River to Khwaja Sala. To the south it is contained by the high mountains of the Hindu Kush, which form the dividing line of the country from east to west.

Quite lately Habib Ullah has proposed to redistribute the various districts which make up the provinces of Badakshan and Afghan Turkestan, so that two new provinces may soon come into existence. These will have their headquarters at Mazar-i-Sharif

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and Khanabad respectively. The first will consist of the districts of Balkh, Akcha, Shibirghan, Andkhui, and Tashkurgan, extending to the Oxus on the north and Bamian on the south. The second will take in all the country eastwards to Chitral, including Badakshan and Wakhan. Each province will have a governor with two deputies. Sirdar Ghulam Ali Khan, brother of the Amir, will be governor of one, and another brother, Sirdar Omar Khan, will have his headquarters in the other. It is intended at a later date to subdivide the provinces of Herat and Kandahar in similar fashion, all the governors being of royal blood.

The province of Herat extends, east and west, from near the sources of the Hari-Rud to the Persian boundary beyond Ghorian, some 300 miles; and in length, between its northern frontier and Seistan in the south, some 200 miles. As a whole the region lacks any particular industrial or agricultural activity, its present appearance suggesting that the unsettled conditions prevailing on its northern frontiers have discouraged all efforts towards local development. Although it contains such centres as Obah and Sabzawar, besides places of less note, it is an impoverished province and requires years of honest administration before it can recover from the ill effects of the abuses which have distinguished its existence.

Although the Herat Province for a long time has been the seat of Afghan government, sometimes in subordination to Kabul or upon occasion indepen-

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dent, it has been, nevertheless, the object of constant attention from Persia. (Since Ahmed Shah Durani founded the Durani Empire, Herat has ranked as one of the three chief cities of the country; and, even with the downfall of the dynasty which Ahmed Shah established and his son Timur wrecked, it has contrived to play an interesting part in the fortunes of the State, if not always an important one. But from the time when it was incorporated in the Afghan kingdom by Dost Mohammed forty-three years ago, it has experienced without any serious interruption the yoke of the Kabul Government, until, freed from the menace of Persian aggression by British intervention, it needs to-day only a period of equitable government to restore its fortunes.)

At the present date the province comprises between five and six hundred villages, with some forty-five thousand households distributed over the centres of Ghorian, Sabzawar, Farah Bakwa, Kurak, Obek, Ghor, and Kala Nao. In the days when it formed a separate principality, many tribes, now lying within the Persian and Russian boundaries, were allied in arms with Herat, the prestige of its reputation enforcing a general recognition of its position and obedience to its behests. The old order has now quite disappeared. With the advance of Russia to the northern frontier of Afghanistan the independence of these roving peoples has been curtailed and their love of war suppressed, the new arrangement depriving the former khanate of no small proportion of its earlier glories. As a province of Afghanistan,

Herat is the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the north-western frontier and the seat of a provincial governor; it remains to be seen whether it becomes a centre of industrial activity in connection with the army.

While it is impossible to define with absolute accuracy the various boundaries, there is no doubt that in point of size the province of Kandahar is the most extensive of any in Afghanistan. Although it has long ceased to be the seat of the supreme government of the country, this province is second to none in the value of its commercial importance, while its revenues have become an important factor in the upkeep of the kingdom. The dimensions of its wide area extend from a few miles south of Ghazni in the north-east to the Persian frontier and from the northern extremity of the Hazara country to the Afghan-Belooch border. The district centres which the province contains are Farah, Kelat-i-Ghilzai, Girishk, Laush, Khash, Barakail, and Afghan-Seistan. A division of interests marks the relations existing between Kandahar and the Farah district which, although governed from Kandahar, exercises complete jurisdiction over its own revenues. Excluding this source, the local revenue, which is assessed in grain, returns a little short of a million rupees annually, the customs and town duties of Kandahar city equalling the land revenues of the entire province. Lying somewhat closer to Kabul than does Herat, Kandahar has shared the fortunes of the capital city, revealing the effect in itself of

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any change of rulers in Kabul. Nevertheless, while it has experienced certain intervals of independence, Kandahar Province, unlike Herat Province, has not suffered from the effects of continuous dynastic wars and the dread of Persian invasion. In general, too, the tide of its disasters has flowed from India, British armies of occupation having been in possession of its areas at various dates since Anglo-Indian arms first supported the cause of Shah Shujah. The days of British intervention have passed long since, and the province, no less than the city, is now an integral part of the Amir's dominions.

The division of Afghanistan into settled provinces is due to the initiative of Dost Mohammed, the earliest movement in this direction being the despatch of an expedition under Mohammed Akbar Khan, his son. This brought about the downfall of the khanates in the regions south of the Oxus. Turkestan, including what is now described as Badakshan, was not completely subjugated as the result of this individual's military activities. It was not until about 1866, when Shir Ali despatched Mohammed Alum Khan to Balkh as Governor of that centre, that the operations began which were to lead to the complete conquest by Afghan arms of all the khanates contained within the Oxus region. Mohammed Alum Khan, through his general, Hafiz Ullah Khan, defeated Mahmud Shah, the ruler of Badakshan. By this victory the dependent states of Shighnan Roshan, and Wakhan were occupied. Subsequently the annexation of Maimana rounded off the operations

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which, in the first instance at the hands of Mohammed Akbar Khan and later at the instigation of Mohammed Alum Khan, had brought about the extension of the Afghan dominions to the banks of the Oxus and the Murghab. The conquered area was not to remain long without a change in the fashion of its government; one of the earliest administrative acts of Abdur Rahman was to split it up into two divisions — Afghan Turkestan and Badakshan. With this improvement upon the previous condition of their affairs, these troublous little hot-beds of anarchy and misrule were extinguished, the areas being incorporated in one or other of the two provinces; their former boundaries now represent the limits of the districts or counties into which they were converted.

The chief of these khanates was that of Kunduz, presided over by a Mir and covering 19,000 square miles. It was divided into three districts:

(1) Kunduz, with the sub-districts of Baglan, Ghorī, Doshi, Killagai, Khinjan, Anderab, Khost, Narin, Ishkashim, Khanabad, Tashkurgan, Haibak.

(2) Talikhan, with the sub-districts of Talikhan, Rustak, Chiab, Faizabad, Jarm, Wakhan.

(3) Hazrat Imam, with the sub-districts of Hazrat Imam, Siab, Kulab, Tapa, Kurgan Yube, Kabadian, Muminabad.

Great changes have taken place in the territory which once belonged to Kunduz. Kulab, Muminabad, Kabadian, have passed into the possession of Russia; while Ghorī, Narin, Kunduz, Baglan, Anderab, Rustak, Wakhan, and Faizabad have been shorn

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from its territories and handed over to the province of Badakshan for administrative purposes. In the days when the Khan of Kunduz exercised jurisdiction over a belt of country extending from the Wakhan Valley to the Kunduz River, the population was returned at 420,000 people, in the main composed of Uzbeks and Tajiks. At that time, too, the district of Kunduz possessed 60,000 houses, that of Talikhan 25,000 houses, while in Hazrat Imam there were 20,000 houses. Kunduz, the former capital of this territory, has fallen from its high estate. It is nowadays a mean and sparsely inhabited district; the little town itself contains barely 1500 houses, the extreme unhealthfulness of the region having caused the residents of this former populous centre to abandon it. The place still boasts traces of a fortress; and a wretched citadel, situated in its north-east corner, is the seat of a petty official. Time has quite obscured the lines of the defences, and a dry ditch, which once surrounded the work, is now laid out in fruit gardens or sown with patches of corn.

West of Kunduz lay the khanate of Khulm, now eclipsed by the more important centre of Tashkurgan. In the days of its supremacy the Khulm territory included the districts of Tashkurgan, Haibak, and Khurram Sarbag. When the seat of local government was removed from Khulm to Tashkurgan, the place lapsed into decay and, now that Haibak has been brought under the direct administration of the Kabul Province, Tashkurgan has

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become the most important centre of what was once a flourishing khanate. The town of Khulm stood out in the Oxus plain, surrounded by a belt of very productive land. The irrigation of this district was highly developed; even now there are numerous orchards and cultivated fields about the site of the ruined city. The population has disappeared and barely 100 families remain on the outskirts.

To the east of Kunduz, 15 miles distant, is Khanabad, the proposed centre of one of the suggested new provinces. It is situated on the right bank of the Farkhan branch of the Kunduz River. The population is dependent on traffic from Cis-Oxus areas, although in recent years considerable local trade has sprung up. The town is surrounded by high walls and lies on the brow of hills which overlook the Kunduz region; it contains some 1500 households. In summer time a far larger estimate could be returned as its numbers fluctuate. A position of some military strength has been made, and the fort, which is comparatively new, possesses strong mud-walls, 18 feet in height. The Farkhan River, abreast of Khanabad, divides into two channels. The western channel is 3 feet deep and 15 yards wide; the stream possesses a rate of 5 miles an hour. The eastern channel is 60 yards wide and flows immediately below the walls of the town.

Tashkurgan, a cheerless group of villages enclosed by a mud-wall, is the great trade mart of Afghan-Turkestan and a distributing point for the merchandise which caravans bring there from India and

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Bokhara. The wall, which is 3 miles in circumference, is pierced by wooden gates, and the houses of the villages number between 15,000 and 20,000. The population is subject to fluctuation. It falls as low as 15,000 in the winter season, rising with great rapidity as soon as the opening of the passes permits the resumption of trade relations with China, Russian Turkestan, and India. Each house is protected by an eight-foot high mud-wall, which imparts a dreary and monotonous appearance to the streets. The houses are built of clay and sun-dried bricks, with one storey and a domed roof. As a rule, they stand amid a profusion of fruit-trees; and, in the approach from the west, the town is lost in a maze of fruit gardens. The streets are straight and only of moderate breadth; they intersect each other at right angles and down the centre of each there is an irrigating channel. A branch of the Doaba River, increased by many rivulets, runs through the town, but it is absorbed by the soil soon after it has passed old Khulm.

Bazaars are held every Monday and Thursday and, in addition to the produce of Bokhara and India, there is a considerable market in live stock: horses, mules, cows, sheep, goats, and asses being assembled in their respective quarters for sale. Cotton goods, cloth, and silk-stuffs from India; tanned leather, raw cotton, hides, fuel from Turkestan; grapes, raisins, pistachio nuts, pomegranates, dried plums from the country-side; rock salt, Russian boots, indigenous dyes — as the pomegranate bark and madder —

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and indigo imported from India, are exposed, together with chogas from Chitral and raw wool from Badakshan. Printed chintzes, quilts, and turbans are also brought from Russian Turkestan; and coarse saddlery from Kabul is much in request. One section of the bazaar is set aside for the sale of melons, which are raised in great quantities in the neighbourhood.

The population is typical of a frontier region, and a sprinkling of natives from every quarter of Central Asia may be found there. The Hindoos act as money-lenders and bankers, exacting an exorbitant usury; and other natives of India keep the drug stores and the dye shops. The vendors of dried fruits are mostly from Kabul. The trade with Yarkand is in the hands of Andijani merchants, who acquire the sheep and furs of the Oxus territory in exchange, at Yarkand, for tea, which is disposed of in Turkestan.

Fifty miles to the west of Khulm there is the beginning of what once was the territory of Balkh, which draws its water from 18 canals fed from the Balkh River. To-day the scene of the Mother of Cities reflects nothing but decay. The bazaar, simply a covered street with a few shops in it, runs through the village. The combined population of the district does not exceed 2000, including a small colony of Hindoos and about 70 Jews. Both these classes are shop-keepers and each is subject to a capitation tax. The caste of the Hindoos is shown by the usual painted marks upon the forehead, and

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the Jews wear a black sheepskin cap. The climate of Balkh is very insalubrious, but the heat is temperate. In June the thermometer does not rise above 80°, while July is the hottest month of the year. The crops do not ripen until July, which makes the harvest fifty days later than Peshawar. The region is unusually fertile. Indeed, the fruit of Balkh is most famous, and the apricots grow to the size of apples. The soil is of a greyish colour, like pipe-clay, and very rich. Within the Balkh region water is distributed by means of aqueducts leading from the Balkh River. The area of cultivation is not sufficient to exhaust the capacity of these canals, their constant overflow accounting for the extreme unhealthfulness of the place. Aside from this peculiarity, the country is not naturally marshy. The district lies some 1800 feet above the level of the sea, about 6 miles from the hills on a gentle slope, which sinks towards the Oxus. The waters of the Balkh River do not at the present day reach the Oxus, the stream being consumed in the Balkh plain.

The spectacle of ruined Balkh, which at one time extended in a circuit of 20 miles, must recall Old Merv. Formerly it was surrounded by walls, some 6½ miles in circumference. Nothing is left of these walls to-day but a mound of dried mud, worn by the weather into all manner of desolate and fantastic shapes. The whole of the northern half of the old city is one vast waste. Within the Akchah gate three lofty arches mark the remains of the

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Jumma Masjid and at the cross-roads there are the foundations of the *charsu*. A little to the east of it there are two lofty gateways, the remains of the main city gates — the western portion of the city having been added subsequently. The southern and south-eastern portions stood upon a high mound which resembled the position of Herat, but all the remainder, with the exception of the old fort and citadel, was low and not more than 10 feet thick. The citadel, in its south-west corner, stood some 50 feet higher still. The whole was surrounded by a separate moat, rather narrow towards the city but with steeply scarped sides.¹ This citadel must now be nothing but a mound, the weather having obliterated even the remnants found by Colonel C. E. Yate. To its north lay the fort, an empty, bare place, surrounded by high walls and ruined bastions, with no signs of habitation except the *débris* of a mass of low brick buildings at its southern end. It stood at a considerable height above the level of its surroundings.

Between Khulm and Balkh, 9 miles east of Balkh and 26 miles from Khulm, is Mazar-i-Sharif, situated on a canal drawn from the Balkh-ab and containing rather more than 2000 households. It is held in the greatest veneration by Mohammedans in general and especially by Shiah, on account of the firm conviction that Hazrat Ali was buried there. The tomb consists of two lofty cupolas which were built some 480 years ago. An annual fair is held,

¹ "Northern Afghanistan." Major C. E. Yate.

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during which old and young, the blind, the infirm, the halt, and the maimed of many a distant region crowd to Mazar-i-Sharif and, encamping round its shrine, plead day and night for the saint's interposition on their behalf. Where cures are effected, they are the result more usually of a change of air and scene; but the greater portion of the faithful return as they came, bewailing their want of belief and their sins, yet never questioning the potency of the shrine.

Mazar-i-Sharif is the summer resort of nearly the whole population of the Balkh district, as its situation is more elevated, its temperature less oppressive and its air less impure than that enjoyed by the Mother of Cities. In contrast with Balkh it is the centre of a flourishing district, where the soil is rich, returning ample compensation for any agricultural attention that it may receive. A large trade emanates from this region, as, in addition to an extensive settled population, there are considerable military establishments. The headquarters of these are located at Takht-a-Pul, where Dost Mohammed was occupied for five years in constructing a fortified cantonment, and Dehdadi. The former is protected by a broad, deep moat and enclosed within double walls 30 feet in height, pierced for musketry, bearing gun towers, and flanked by imposing bastions; the latter commands the road from the Oxus and lies upon the summit of a high mountain overlooking Mazar-i-Sharif from the south-west. Twelve years were spent upon the construction and equipment of

this frontier stronghold, and in the days of Abdur Rahman it was defended by an assortment of guns, embracing Krupp field-pieces, naval quick-firers — such as Nordenfeldt and Hotchkiss — and a number of Maxims. The works are well protected from gunfire, and great pains have been taken to depress all epaulements to the level of the mountain face.

Beyond Balkh the territories of a number of minor khanates began. Forty miles west of Balkh there was Akcha, an Uzbek khanate, while farther west again there were the areas of the four territories of Andkhui, Shibirghan, Saripul, and Maimana. The first and the last of these petty governments were the most important, the latter preserving until lately a form of independence. Each of these little states has experienced singular vicissitudes, fighting constantly among themselves, occasionally uniting against the Afghans or the Amir of Bokhara. Andkhui, particularly, has endured many reverses of fortune, since, lying upon the roads from Herat, the Turkoman country, and Bokhara, it has always been subject to attack. In recent years it has enjoyed a period of peace, but even under existing conditions it has not regained its earlier prosperity. At one time the khanate contained nearly 50,000 families, 13,000 living in the town. The population is a mixture of many races — Tajiks, Uzbeks, Persians, and Turkomans — whose religious convictions are divided between the Shiah and Sunni sects in almost equal proportions.

Andkhui is situated on the Sangalak River, which,

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rising in the Band-i-Turkestan, flows past Maimana to be lost in the desert before reaching the Oxus. The water of the river is undrinkable; but it is used extensively for purposes of irrigation, and imparts so much prosperity to the Andkhui district that a zone of cultivation extends several miles round the city. Fruit, corn, rice, and live stock are raised in great abundance; a bustling trade is conducted in black lamb-skins with Persia, in camels with the districts beyond the Oxus, in fruit and cereal products with inter-provincial centres. The population now resident in the town has fallen from its former high figure; it is estimated that there are only 3000 families within the walls. The houses are all flat-roofed, low mud-buildings. The city walls are in ruins; the bazaar and the fort are the sole points of interest in the place. The bazaar, which is situated where four cross-roads meet, is insignificant. It lies in the centre of the town and is roofed with matting. The market days are Sundays and Thursdays; but little business at other times is transacted. Beyond the bazaar there is the fort — a high, irregularly shaped enclosure, some 250 yards or 300 yards in diameter. It is occupied by a garrison consisting of one company from the regular regiments at Maimana, 3 companies of Khasadars, 2 guns, and 100 sowars, the latter force being quartered beyond the walls on the northern face.

The last of the little khanates, whose areas now compose the province of Afghan Turkestan, is that of Maimana. This extends a distance of 18 miles in

breadth and 20 miles in length. Besides the chief town it contains ten villages, of which the most considerable are Kaisar, Kafarkala, Alvar, and Khojakand. Maimana itself has 35,000 families. The population, divided into settlers and nomads, is estimated at 100,000 souls; in point of nationality they are for the most part Uzbeqs of the tribes of Min, Atchamali, and Duz. There is a sprinkling of Tajiks, Heratis, and a few Hindoos, Afghans, and Jews. Hindoos and Jews pay small capitation taxes. The town Maimana is situated upon a plain in the midst of hills. It is surrounded by an earth-wall 12 feet high, 5 feet thick, and a ditch. It has towers at the angles and four gates. Its extent is about 2 miles in circumference, but the place shows considerable neglect and decay. The town is extremely filthy, and the bazaar is in a most dilapidated condition. In it are three mosques and two schools, the former constructed of mud and the latter of brick.

The revenue of the district is estimated at £20,000, but the taxes of the town are levied by the local authorities as follows: one tithe on the produce of land, one tila (Rs. 7) on each garden, $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on cattle, sheep, and merchandise, one-half tila on each house, six tilas on each shop, one tila on the sales of horses or camels. In addition to the tax on merchandise, transit duties are levied on every camel-load of iron or other goods, while the Government also forms a close monopoly of alum, nitre, and sulphur.

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The prevailing climatic conditions of Afghanistan are dryness combined with great extremes of temperature. Snow lies on the ground for three months during the year in the Kabul and Ghazni districts, while many of the peaks from the Hindu Kush to Kelat rise above the snow-line. But so much depends on elevation that Jelalabad, 2000 feet above the sea, is scarcely colder than India, while the winters on the neighbouring Kohistan uplands are as severe as those of Russia. The coldest month of the year is February, the mean minimum being 17° F. and the maximum 38° in the northern districts. The greatest cold is accompanied by an extreme lowness of temperature; during the continuation of the cold wave, which may remain for several days, the temperature varies from a mean of 12° below zero to a maximum of 17° below freezing-point. In Kabul, where the snow lies upon the ground for three months, the thermometer falls to 3° below zero and in Ghazni it sinks to 10° below zero, with a daily maximum rise of 5° . The summer heat, on the other hand, is everywhere high, especially in the Oxus region where a shade maximum of 110° to 120° is usual. At Kabul (6500 feet) the glass rises to 90° and 100° in the shade, and in Kandahar to 110° . Nonetheless, southern Afghanistan is, on the whole, decidedly more salubrious than the fever-stricken lowland districts of Afghan Turkestan.

If such is an outline of the physical and climatic conditions of Afghanistan, the ethnographic divisions no less require mention. In spite of the disappear-

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ance of the khanates and the incorporation of their territories with Kabul, strong differences of race still mark out the several peoples.

The subjoined table comprises the different tribes classified according to their geographical distribution:

Aryans	Galeha Branch	Wakhis	}	Hindu Kush (northern slopes).
		Badakhshis		
		Swatis	}	Hindu Kush (southern slopes).
		Siah-Posh Kafirs		
		Safis		
	Iranic Branch	Chagnans	}	Hills north of Kabul.
		Kohistanis		
		Afghans	}	Kabul; Suliman Mountains; Kandahar; Helmund basin; Herat.
		Tajiks		
		Seistanis	}	Lower Helmund; Hamun.
Mongolo- Tartars	Indic Branch	Hindkis		
	Mongol Branch	Hazaras	}	Northern highlands between Baiman and Herat.
		Aimaks		
	Turki Branch	Uzbegs	}	Afghan Turkestan.
		Turkomans		
		Kizil Bashis		

The Afghans claim to be Ben-i-Israel, but since Ahmed Shah Durani announced the independence of his State the Afghans of Afghanistan have styled themselves Durani. They are settled principally in the Kandahar country, extending into Seistan and to the borders of the Herat Valley. Eastward they spread across the Afghan border into the Toba highlands north of the Khojak, where they are represented by Achakzai and Sadozai clans. They exist

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in the Kabul districts as Barakzai (the Amir's clan), and as Mahmundzai (Mohmands), and Yusufzai. They occupy the hills north of the Kabul River, Bajor, Swat, Buner, and part of the Peshawar plains.

After the Afghans the dominant people are the Pukhtun or Pathans, represented by a variety of tribes, many of whom are recognised as being of Indian origin. They inhabit the hilly regions along the immediate British frontier. The Afridi Jowaki and Orakzai clans hold the highlands immediately south of the Khyber and Peshawar, the Turis of the Kurram, the Dawaris of Tochi, and the Waziris of Waziristan filling up the intervening Pathan Hills north of the Gomul. In the Kohat district the Khat-tak and Bangash clans are Pathan, so that Pathans are found on both sides of the border.

The Ghilzai is reckoned as a Pathan, and he is also connected with the Afghan. Nevertheless his origin is distinct; he claims only ties of faith and affinity of language with other Afghan peoples. The Ghilzai rank collectively as second to none in military strength and in commercial enterprise; further, their chiefs take a leading part in the politics of the country, possessing much influence at Kabul. They are a fine, manly race of people, and it is from some of their most influential clans (Suliman Khel, Nasir Khel, Kharotis, etc.) that the main body of Povich merchants is derived. These frontier commercial travellers trade between Ghazni and the plains of India, bringing down their heavily laden *khafilas* at

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the commencement of the cold weather and retiring again to the hills ere the summer heat sets in. During the winter months thousands of them circulate through the farthest districts of the peninsula, where it not infrequently happens that they prove to be troublesome, if not dangerous, visitors.

Underlying the predominant Afghan and Ghilzai elements in Afghan ethnography, there is the Tajik, who, representing the original Persian possessors of the soil, still speaks his mother tongue. There are pure Persians in Afghanistan, such as the Kizil Bashis of Kabul and the Naoshirwans of Kharan. The Tajiks are the cultivators in the rural districts; the shop-keepers and clerks in the towns; while they are slaves of the Pathan in Afghanistan no less than the Hindkis are in the plains of the Indus.

Next in importance to the Tajik is the Mongol Hazara, who speaks a dialect of Persian and belongs to the Shiah sect of Mohammedans. The Hazaras occupy the highlands of the upper Helmund Valley, spreading through the country between Kabul and Herat, as well as into a strip of territory on the frontier slopes of the Hindu Kush. In the western provinces they are known as Hazaras, Jamshidis, Taimanis, and Ferozkhois; in other districts they are distinguished by the name of the territory which they occupy. They are pure Mongols; intermixing with no other races, preserving their language and their Mongol characteristics, they are uninfluenced by their surroundings.

In Afghan Turkestan the Tajik is allied with the

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Uzbek and Turkoman; the chief Turkoman tribes left to Afghan rule being the Alieli of the Daolatabad-Andkhur districts and the Ersaris of the Khwaja Salar section of the Oxus frontier. Originally robbers and raiders, they have now beaten their swords into ploughshares and concern themselves with agricultural pursuits.

Thus while there is an Afghan race almost identical in physical type, speech, religion, and culture, there is none possessing a distinct sense of its unity, with common political sentiments and aspirations. The Duranis, the Ghilzais, the Waziris, the Afridis, the Mongols, Mohmands, Jusafzais, and others form many different communities within the State. Each possesses separate interests, although Ahmed Shah Durani endeavoured to give a national importance to his tribe, not only by changing its name from Abdali to Durani, but also by associating with it other sections — the Jusufzais, Mohmands, Afridis, Shinwaris, Orakzais, and Turkolanis — under the common designation of Bar-Duranis. The attempt failed, and these sections still retain their tribal integrity, declining to be fused together; so that, while the peoples of Afghanistan have lost their independence, it cannot be said that they have not preserved their individuality.

CHAPTER XIV

ADMINISTRATION, LAWS, AND REVENUE

THE task which presented itself to Abdur Rahman upon his accession to the throne was of such magnitude that few Asiatic potentates would have ventured to cope with it. The gravest confusion prevailed in every department of political, civil, and military administration, while the supremacy of the Amir of Kabul received no very definite recognition from the Sirdars who were ruling over the several tribes which together made up the State. Under Dost Mohammed, as also in the reign of Shir Ali, the Sirdars, jealous, ambitious, and turbulent, governed in their respective districts each after his own fashion. The controlling authority of the Amir of Kabul was not infrequently defied; and as no community of interests existed between Kabul and the khanates there was no enduring form of government. Everything depended upon the pleasure of chiefs who, regulated by no law, were always ready to indulge in hostilities for their own gratification. The results of such a system of government are illustrated by the civil war of 1863-1869, which distinguished the early years of Shir Ali's reign, the final triumph of that ruler securing the paramountcy of

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the Amir of Kabul throughout Afghanistan. While Shir Ali founded a certain despotic sovereignty over Afghanistan, it was Abdur Rahman who, by establishing a military autocracy, guaranteed the absolutism of the Amir. The continuation of such a form of government is possible only so long as the Amir is able to rely upon the unswerving loyalty of his troops. But until the moment of disunion arrives the ruler of Afghanistan is a dictator, whose absolute authority is limited only by the calculations which prudence dictates. Religion is the one counterpoise to his authority, and the growing influence of the priests — an influence which has increased decidedly since the accession of Habib Ullah — represents the sole quarter from which might arise disturbing elements.

Under Abdur Rahman the power of the priests was held in check; his rugged independence did not permit him to brook, even covertly, the exercise of priestly authority. The church restrained, he was able to proceed with the work of curtailing the rights and privileges of the chiefs who, at one and the same time, had been a source of strength or of danger to his predecessors. Prompt to defend the authority of the Amir of Kabul when relations were cemented by a good understanding, and accustomed to a certain degree to participate in the affairs of government, the tribal chiefs refused to resign any measure of their authority when such action threatened to precipitate the disappearance of their powers. Dost Mohammed did not attempt to interfere with the Sirdars; Shir Ali introduced into their position no

perceptible modification. The tribal system was in full swing at the time when Abdur Rahman ascended the throne. At that moment each tribe, together with its sub-divisions, according to its numerical force and territorial dimensions, supported one or more of the reigning chiefs. These leaders, whose existence may be compared with that enjoyed by the dukes and barons of the Middle Ages in France, occupied so great a position in the State that the enlistment of their services upon behalf of the throne carried with it a weight always sufficient to maintain the balance of the scales in favour of the ruler of Kabul. Nevertheless, in order to fortify his own position, Abdur Rahman decided to suppress them. One by one they were brought under subjection, the gradual circumscription of their authority paving the way to the subsequent solidarity which distinguished his own position. From this step he proceeded to fasten upon the remains of the old system a new administration, purging the Augean stable and curbing the rights of the chiefs no less than the license of the individual.

Hitherto in Afghanistan freedom of movement had been permitted. There was nothing to prevent the entire population of a village from crossing the border if the majority of its elders were so inclined. Abdur Rahman checked this liberty, instituting a system which allowed none but the authorised to move between the great centres of the country or to venture beyond its frontiers. It is not to be supposed that he was able to maintain free from abuse

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his new order of government. Spoliation and embezzlement had existed so long in Afghanistan that recourse to them had become second nature to every functionary. Each official, whether he were the product of the new order or a remnant of the old, was corrupt and regarded abuse of office as the customary symbol of administrative power. The existence of such a practice necessarily threw into confusion any attempt at reform; and, although Abdur Rahman produced much elaborate machinery, departmental disorders continued unabated. In Kabul, in spite of many high-sounding titles, the methods of the new order were still regulated by the principles of the old.

To the ignorant or to the zealous this condition of affairs may perhaps be disappointing; but in any Oriental government the first and only thought of the official classes is the enhancement of their own interests and the enrichment of their private coffers. Abdur Rahman put a stop to the sale of public offices, but he could not control the disbursement and acceptance of bribes by which such offices can be awarded; and, from the highest to the lowest, while success favours the delinquent, his crime attracts no attention so long as he may distribute his favours. Even under Abdur Rahman it was rarely that officials of importance were brought to book, while to-day the Throne itself visits the avaricious by exacting the repletion of its privy purse at the expense of justice.

It is of course to the credit of Abdur Rahman that he began his task at the beginning. At the time of his succession the system of government was so

involved that the entire machinery of the civil administration was carried on by a staff of ten clerks, who were controlled by an official combining within himself the functions of every executive officer. There were no public offices and the seat of government was the bed-room of this man. There were no books; the statements of expenditure and the records of Government business were entered upon small slips of paper, 8 inches long and 6 inches wide, each sheet containing the briefest abstract of the matter with which it was concerned. If any reference were required it frequently happened that thousands of these pages had to be examined. In order to remedy this system of keeping records Abdur Rahman introduced ledgers and record books, the defacement of which was an offence punishable by the amputation of the fingers. From this, in due course, he proceeded to create a military and civil administration. Under military administration, in addition to the armed forces of the army, militia, and levies, he included the departments concerned with the manufacture of every variety of war material and the industries associated with each. All workmen employed in these concerns and all foreigners whose services were retained by the Government were brought within the supervision of the military bureau. Upon the military side, too, he arranged that pay-sheets should be honoured monthly, while treasury disbursements, which were incorporated in the revenue branch of the civil department, were made annually or, in certain exceptions, bi-yearly.

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The civil administration, as ordained by Abdur Rahman, still continues. It embraces the Boards of Treasury and Trade, the Bureaux of Justice and Police, the Offices of Records, Public Works, Posts, and Communications. The Departments of Education and Medicine are a separate organisation. The Board of Treasury is divided into four departments of Revenue and Expenditure — northern, southern, eastern, and western — in connection with which there are the State Treasury and the Private Treasury. The State Treasury is controlled by the State Treasurer and the Councillors of the Exchequer, who render accounts to an Accountant-General. Statements of revenue and expenditure are receipted daily and every evening an abstract, showing the transactions of the day and countersigned by the heads of the departments concerned, is submitted to the Amir. The Private Treasury is occupied solely with the income and monies of the Royal Family. Each Treasury is divided into two branches, the one being set aside for payments in cash and the other for the reception of transactions in kind. The Board of Trade includes the Caravan Department and the Customs House Department. Branches of these are established in the larger centres and appeals from them pass through the chief bureau in Kabul, where they are referred to the office of the Financial Commissioner, Mirza Shah Beg Khan, for presentation to the Amir when the necessity arises.

Government is conducted through the agency of

a Supreme Council and a General Assembly drawn from three classes. At present these are certain Sirdars who take their seats as members of the Royal Clan; the Khans, who are representatives of the country; and the Mullahs, who are the representatives of the Mohammedan religion. Abdur Rahman modified in some degree the rights and privileges of the Sirdars in connection with the Royal Durbars; nowadays only those who are the descendants of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan and his brothers, or who have received the specific sanction of the Throne to bear the title, may occupy a place at them. These three classes are divided into two parties. One of them is known as the Durbar Shahi or the Supreme Council; the other is called the Khawanin Mulkhi or General Assembly. These representatives are convoked by a call from the Aishak Akasee, whose position resembles that held by the Lord Chamberlain in England. It is his duty to summon all the members of the Supreme Council and to arrange their seats according to the order of their merit. He has another subordinate officer, who is called Omla Bashi, who notifies the General Assembly and takes a receipt for the delivery of the notices of meeting. On their arrival outside the Durbar Hall councillors are received at the gate by another officer, called Kabchi Bashi, who is a deputy of the Aishak Akasee. The Kabchi Bashi introduces members of the General Assembly to the Aishak Akasee.

Upon the attendance of these three Estates of the Realm the Amir reads a proclamation or makes a

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speech on the subjects which are claiming the attention of the meeting and at the same time asks their opinion. This usually results in the expression of the same views as those held by the Amir, as this assembly has neither the capacity nor the courage to detect anything wrong in the law or policy of their sovereign. Another mode of introducing an alteration of the law is that some member or members of this assembly may lay a petition before the Amir, to which sanction may be given. The most important factor in securing any change consists in the daily reports from the magistrates, the governors, the ecclesiastical and criminal courts, the revenue department, and other offices of the Government, who forward their decisions for approval and sanction, or send in their petitions or the petitions of tribes in the country requesting the Amir to sign a new ordinance. If the Amir forms a favourable opinion upon these documents they are enrolled in the Record Office of the Government.

The Amir's Supreme Council or Cabinet differs from the English Cabinet in that there is no Prime Minister and that the Cabinet cannot give any advice to the Crown without being asked to do so. The Amir is seldom absent from his Council, but its assemblage simply depends on the pleasure of the Crown. If the presence of any member is unpopular in the country, the people have the power to protest against it.

The following officials constitute the Cabinet:¹ the

¹ "Laws and Constitution of Afghanistan." Sultan Mohammed Khan.

Aishak Akasee; Lord of the Seal; Chief Secretary and several other secretaries; the military officials of the body-guard; Lord Treasurer of the private treasury of the Sovereign; Secretary of State for War; Secretaries of State for the North, South, East, and West; Postmaster-General; Commander-in-Chief or his deputy; Master of the Horse; Kotwal or Home Secretary; Quartermaster-General; Accountant-General; Groom of the Bed-chamber; Superintendent of the Magazines; Heads of the Board of Trade and of the Board of Education. In addition there are sometimes those other officials or chiefs who may be sufficiently in the confidence of the Amir to be admitted to the meetings.

The following division of business is usually observed: Monday and Thursday are devoted to postal despatches and to the Exchequer; Tuesday is set aside for consideration of military cases and the affairs of the War Office; Wednesday is devoted to the affairs of the whole kingdom when public as well as private Durbars are held; Friday is observed as a religious holiday; on Saturday the Amir sits as a Court of Appeal and Supreme Court of Justice; Sunday is devoted to the inspection of the army, magazines, war materials, manufactories, industries, and various miscellaneous matters.

The laws of Afghanistan at the present day may be placed under three headings:

(1) Islamic laws.

(2) Those created by the Amir, which are based upon Islamic laws, the opinions of the people, and

the personal views of Habib Ullah as well as of his father, the late Amir.

(3) Tribal laws.

In criminal, revenue, and political law the procedure was devised by Abdur Rahman; but for the rest, Islamic law is the general practice. The cases decided by the Amir himself are brought under two headings:

Firstly, he sits as a Supreme Court of Appeal, in which capacity he hears and decides the appeals from all the various courts, whether civil, criminal, or ecclesiastical.

Secondly, there are some cases which he hears himself from the beginning and decides himself, just as do the inferior courts.

Commonly it is understood that when the Amir sits as an original court to hear cases which are not appeals from any other court, such cases must be of great importance: such as political disputes, cases of high treason, offences against the Throne, and matters of Government revenue. This is merely a theory, since any person who has even a trifling matter in dispute can have his case decided by the Amir himself if he fears that the subordinate court is prejudiced; or if he chooses for any other reason to go before the Amir in preference to going before the subordinate courts. It is in the pleasure of the Crown to refer such a plaintiff to the subordinate courts unless the plaintiff can prove that he has reason to believe that justice would not be equally meted out in such a court.

The rule of Appeal, unlike that of England, is that the superior court, instead of being satisfied with the investigation of the subordinate court, takes the case as if it were a new one. New evidence, fresh inquiries, and investigations are made from the very beginning, as though the case had never previously been tried.

(1) *Appeals*: These are brought before the Amir in the following ways:

Firstly, the various courts forward for his approval such judgments as they consider of great importance and do not like to take upon themselves the responsibility of deciding.

Secondly, the same courts forward to the Amir for his opinion questions on which there is no definitely laid down law by which to abide.

Thirdly, in cases where the spies of the Amir, who are supposed to be everywhere, report to him that some kind of fraud or partiality had been shown in a decision.

Fourthly, where a plaintiff or defendant is dissatisfied with the judgment of any court he can appeal to the Amir.

(2) *Court of First Instance*: Occasionally the Amir sits as a Court of First Instance, when it is permitted to all persons to approach him with grievances, disputes, or claims as they would any other magistrate. Whether it is an appeal or an original case, the modes of trial in civil law are the same. The plaintiff brings his witnesses with him, if it is necessary to have any witness at all, and the defendant

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brings his witnesses also. Both sides are heard and the case is decided upon the spot, the inordinate delay which distinguishes judicial procedure in England being avoided.

The various codes of law are so numerous that they would fill at least a dozen bulky volumes. Every official, the holders of all offices, great or small, in Afghanistan has a manual signed or sealed by the Amir, on which he acts. Instructions are so minute, moreover, that it is a common saying in Afghanistan that there is not a donkey-driver in the country who does not possess a signature of the Amir to some document giving him the law which he is to obey. All classes are amenable to the law, and in theory there is no exemption or special laws — not even for the nearest relative of the Amir, as was once proved when a favourite wife of the late Abdur Rahman was ordered by him to answer in the courts to the summons of a firm of Parsee milliners. Judicial corruption, however, makes evasion of the law neither difficult nor infrequent, and bribery is the cause of a general miscarriage of justice.

The condition of the Criminal Law is singularly barbarous; and no attempt, even upon paper or in theory, has been made to mitigate its crude severity. There is no fixed limit for the various punishments, and, although sentences of death need to be confirmed by the Amir, torture is invariably applied in all cases of criminal procedure. The instrument more generally used is known as the *Fanah*, a contrivance not unlike the “boot.” There are many things in the

Afghan code which are susceptible of improvement, for the whim of the Amir is law, and, at best, he is no better than an amiable despot whose caprice demands immediate realisation. In this, Afghanistan is far removed from the condition of the native States of India and the territories of Bokhara, where, if justice is also tempered with bribery and corruption, life is at least respected until the innocent are proved to be guilty. Not so in the Amir's country, where men are still blown from guns and penalties of equal brutality exacted for comparatively trivial offences. -

Illustrations of the harshness of the law abound in Kabul itself. It is a common spectacle to see prisoners, their ankles encircled by steel bands, which are connected by a rod to a chain round their waists, sitting by the wayside asking alms of passers-by. Under the conditions which prevail in the Kabul prisons, unless the inmates have money or friends who will interest themselves in their plight, they are thrown upon the charity of the public for their means of subsistence. Government provides nothing for them but bread and prison quarters, where, chained and under close observation, they lead a life of endless misery. Justice, too, is very slow-footed and expedition is impossible until the officers of the court, whose duty it is to bring cases-in-waiting to the notice of the judge, have first been bribed. Heavy tolls are levied by all officials for this service and, if the payments are not forthcoming, the trial may never take place or it may be pro-

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tracted through several years. Even then, when prisoners have been tried, their sentences pronounced, and they are at the conclusion of their terms of imprisonment, the rental charges for their use of the prisons have still to be met. The system is iniquitous and imposes upon poor captives the alternative of perpetual slavery, or the necessity to cry for alms in the streets as they go to and from their work. Employment in the workshops, the ordnance yards, and upon the Government buildings is the only description of labour with which the prisoners are furnished. In a measure such work is popular among them, as it affords opportunities for discussion with their friends and gives them for a brief space somewhat greater liberty of movement. Their tasks are of the hardest and roughest description, but they have a chance to wash their clothes — even to take a bath in the canal which runs through the factories. Sometimes, too, regular workmen distribute their food among the prisoners or even present them with a few *pice*. But at all times their fate is terrible and their existence in prison accompanied by extreme privations. Again, if death is the order of their lot, it is impossible to say whether it will be short, sharp, and sudden, or something a little lingering like the ends which befell a robber, and an over-zealous student of political affairs, of whom Abdur Rahman made such terrible examples.

The robber, the leader of a band of brigands whose exploits and activity had won for the Lata Bund Devan an unenviable notoriety, was captured

by the police after many attempts and repeated warnings. The Amir, who had become exasperated at the robberies of the band, determined to make a fitting example of their leader. Upon the summit of the Lata Bund Pass, 8000 feet above sea-level, he erected a flag-staff; from this he suspended an iron cage and in the cage he placed the robber — where he left him, as an example! It is said in Kabul that the fate of that highwayman determined the end of the robber band. Certainly since that day no further crimes of violence have been committed in the pass.

The other was a student who, brought before Abdur Rahman, declared in a state of unrepressed excitement that the Russians were advancing to invade Afghanistan.

“The Russians are coming?” said the Amir with grim deliberation; “then you shall be taken to the summit of yonder tower and shall have no food till you see them arrive.”

The theory of justice in all Eastern countries aims at punishing some one person for every indictable misdemeanour. In China, in Japan, in Korea, and in Africa, too, the autocrat measures the peace of the country-side by the moral effect of his standard of punishment. No crime escapes its levy against the liberty of the subject, although the criminal himself may abscond. A precisely similar state of affairs prevails in Afghanistan where, in the event of the offender escaping, the hostage satisfies the findings of the law. Liberty of movement, therefore, is

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denied to every one in Kabul beyond a six-mile radius measured from the Kabul police station. For permission to go beyond this point it is necessary to obtain at a cost of three rupees a *rahdari* or road-pass, and to leave Afghanistan without such a pass is punishable with death. In point of fact, facilities are never granted until hostages against the failure of the person to return have been given. In the case of any one venturing to leave Afghanistan and failing to come back, his property is at once confiscated, his family is imprisoned, and his more immediate surety is executed. Such a fate befell the family of a soldier who was making a protracted stay in India. Arrested and threatened with execution, their release was secured only by the man's return and surrender, knowing when he did so that he would be blown from a gun on the place of execution. This was ultimately his fate. It is one so constantly meted out to prisoners that, whenever the boom of the gun is heard in Kabul, only those who are of the sternest disposition can suppress the sigh which involuntarily escapes as the mournful sound falls upon the ears. There are, of course, other ways of punishing the guilty than that of blowing them from cannon. Yet the boom of a gun in Kabul only denotes one of three things: the passing of the Amir, the mid-day hour, and the release of a soul to Paradise from the horrors of the Kabul prisons.

In the city of Kabul the Amir does not give the enemies of law and order a chance. The chief mag-

istrate has become an object of public execration and wholesome dread. His spies are believed to be everywhere; and hardly a word can be spoken without its coming to the ears of the Naib Kotwal and through him to the Amir himself. The Kabul police code is curiously elaborate. It forbids evil speaking in the streets. The vituperation of a Said (a reputed descendant of the prophet Mohammed through his daughter Fatima), of a man of learning, or of a civic elder renders the offender liable to twenty lashes and a fine of fifty rupees. If the bad language is only aimed at a common person ten lashes with a fine of ten rupees is the penalty provided. Punishments are also laid down for dishonest tradesmen who cheat with false weights or adulterate the food they sell, for the indecorous bather, the gambler, the purveyor of charms; as also for persons who misbehave in the mosque, forget to say their prayers, or to observe a fast day. The man who kisses some one else's wife receives thirty lashes and is sent to prison for further inquiry.

Careful directions are laid down in regard to administering the lash. The instrument itself is made of three strips of camel, cow, and sheep skin, with a handle of olive wood. The stripes are laid on with pious ejaculations and the police officer is exhorted to feel, if he cannot show, sorrow for the wrong-doer, "since Mohammedans are all of one flesh." Special cognisance is taken of offences against religion. If any free-thinking Kabuli omits to bend his head with due reverence at the hour of prayer the police

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officer must at first remonstrate gently. If the mild appeal fails, he must use harsh terms, such as "O foolish, O stupid one." In the event of continued obstinacy the stick is to be applied; and, as a last resource, the Amir is to be informed. He — "will do the rest."

The departments for the administration of the Government in the provinces are as follows:

(1) The Governor-General, the Governor together with the Secretaries and Staffs.

Strictly speaking, there are no positive restrictions limiting and separating the authority of any one official from that of another. Cases go before any court to which the applicant may choose to take them. As a rule the Governor-General of the province is the executive head of all departments within his sphere and he is looked upon as a Court of Appeal from the District Courts, which are presided over by the District Governor or his subordinate officials. The main duty of the Governor-General is to collect the revenues from the land-owners and to administer the province; of the District Governor, to settle the disputes of land-owners, to keep the peace in his district, to circulate the Kabul proclamations, and to forward from time to time any orders which he may receive from his provincial heads. The chief provinces are administered by Governor-Generals, the more important centres by Governors and the smaller places by District Governors, District Superintendents, and Inspectors. Commanders-in-Chief are associated with the Governors-General of provinces,

and military officers of corresponding subordinate rank assist the civilian officials. Governors, exercising full executive powers locally, report to their Governors-in-Chief, who, in turn, despatch a monthly report to Kabul.

(2) The Kazi (Judge of the Ecclesiastical Court) with his subordinate.

The Ecclesiastical Court of the Kazi is looked upon as the highest tribunal in the province and hence it is not limited to religious subjects; all civil cases, whatever their nature, may be taken before it. Generally speaking, business differences and religious disputes are settled in the District Courts, cases concerning divorce, marriage, and inheritance passing before the Provincial Supreme Court. Cases punishable by death seldom come within the jurisdiction of the provincial courts. The Chief Judge of this court is called Kazi and his subordinates are Muftis. Cases are decided by a majority.

(3) The Kotwal (Head of the Police Department) together with the force of Police, Secretary, and the officials of the Passport Department.

The Kotwal exercises much greater authority in criminal cases than any other criminal official whatever. He combines the duties of a District Chief of Police and a judge of Petty Sessions, while he may determine small criminal cases, forwarding the more serious to the capital. He is also in charge of the local Intelligence Department and is in each centre an official of whose tyranny, oppression, and cruelty stories and poems have been handed down from posterity.

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(4) *Kafila Bashi* (an official of the Caravan Department) with a Board of Commerce, a Revenue Office, Tax-Collector's Office, Treasury Office, and a local military force.

The *Kafila Bashi* is an official who supplies transport to travellers; in this respect he is responsible for the payment of all dues by travellers, as well as for the treatment dealt out to the caravan followers. He receives his commission from those who hire the animals and renders an account of every transaction to the Government. All expenses of this establishment are paid by the Government and the balance passes into the District Treasury.

The Board of Commerce settles disputes between merchants. The President of the Board presides over this court and its members are elected from among the mercantile community, irrespective of religion.

The Revenue Office settles the accounts of the revenue and keeps a record of the taxes which every land-owner must pay annually to the Government. The land revenue is now fixed at one-third of the produce of the soil and is to be collected by the *lam-bardar* of each village. Associated with the Revenue Office are officers who register and copy all documents issued in connection with the collection and expenditure of revenue. Duties upon commerce are levied at the rate of two and one-half per cent. upon all exports and imports, all such monies passing direct into the local treasury.

Abdur Rahman gave his closest attention to the

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revenue. One of his earliest acts was to replace by tokens of his own the currency which had existed under the Khans. Hitherto the money in circulation in Afghanistan had been represented by three varieties of rupees — the Herat, the Kandahar, and the Kabul which, although not really of identical value, were reckoned at ten *shahis*. No gold tokens had been struck by any of the dynasties reigning in the State, and the gold coins which passed in the country were represented by the ducat of Russia, the tilla of Bokhara, and the toman of Persia. These coins had been imported in the natural course of trade; but by a strange coincidence the Persian token suffered a discount, while the Russian and Bokharan coins enjoyed a premium of ten per cent. There were certain silver coins, also, which had been introduced by merchants from beyond the borders. Among these were the silver kran from Persia and the silver rupee from India, equally liable to the vagaries of exchange.

In order to re-establish the currency of the country upon a sound basis Abdur Rahman opened a mint in Kabul. At the same time he reorganised the methods of revenue collection, besides improving the channels through which it was received.

The work of the mint was at first conducted by hand. It was not until some years after he had ascended the throne that the late Amir introduced minting machinery, at the same time requesting the Government of India to loan the services of an Englishman to superintend its erection. The official thus despatched was Mr. McDermot, employed in

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the Calcutta mint; and under his supervision Kabuli workmen learnt to cut the dies, to erect the stamps, and to strike off the coins. The capacity of the plant which was erected in Kabul was limited to a silver and copper mintage of 100,000 coins a day, made up of five and ten pice pieces, rupees, half-rupees, and third-rupees. In contradistinction to the rupees which had previously been struck off at Kabul, each new rupee was worth only one shilling. These coins bore upon their faces the inscription — a translation of a title conferred upon Abdur Rahman by his people in 1896 — “The Light of the Nation and of Religion”; the reverse side bore his coat-of-arms. Until this superscription was adopted, coins were engraved only with the date and place of casting upon one side, and upon the reverse the name of the ruler — “Cast at the Capital of Kabul: Amir Abdur Rahman.” Since Habib Ullah’s accession Abdur Rahman’s coinage has been superseded by a new issue bearing in Turkish characters the inscription “Amir Habib Ullah Khan, Amir of Kabul, The Seeker of God’s help.” The engraving on the obverse represents a mosque with pulpit and minarets, encircled by rifles, standards, swords, and cannon.

While the receipts of Afghan Turkestan were incorporated with these figures, the Herat territory was still an independent sphere and its income on that account is not included. A few years later, under Shir Ali, the revenue from all sources rose to £710,000; which, together with the very handsome subsidy annually paid by the Government of India,

and if it had been assisted by a liberal fiscal policy under Abdur Rahman, well might have expanded to an annual income of one million sterling.

Prior to their systematic collection under the arrangements which were devised by Abdur Rahman, the monies of Afghanistan were obtained by an elaborate process of taxation, which, if not altogether excessive, was accompanied by much unauthorised exaction. Taxes were imposed upon all live stock, upon cultivated ground, upon all varieties of produce, upon houses, and upon certain classes of the population, the apparent aim of the authorities, irrespective of their actual needs, being to extract as much as possible from their unhappy subjects.

Under Abdur Rahman some little relief from the oppressive and arbitrary payments, which were extorted alike from the unfortunate merchant and the luckless cultivator, was secured; and, as he instilled a measure of reform into the practices of government, certain sources of taxation were dropped and the burden resting upon industry and agriculture proportionately lightened. The principal means of income to the State now emanated from taxes which were levied upon cultivated lands and fruit-trees, export and import trade, customs, registration and postage fees (contracts, passport fees, marriage settlements, etc.), penalties under law, revenue from Government lands and shops, Government monopolies and manufactures, mines and minerals (salt, rubies, gold, lapis-lazuli, coal) and the annual sub-

sidy of eighteen lakhs of rupees — these several branches of the State revenue gradually defining the limits of its present prosperity, which has been somewhat further assisted by the benevolent, economic policy of the present Amir. Abuses in the collection of octroi have been remedied, certain taxes abolished, many mines developed, while, to give an impetus to trade in Afghanistan, Habib Ullah has announced that, in future, traders may receive advances from the Kabul Treasury on proper security. This concession is greatly appreciated by the commercial community, as it will enable them to escape the payment of interest to the Hindoo bankers from whom they have been in the habit of borrowing. Moreover, it is expected that if full effect is given to the Amir's wishes trade between India and Afghanistan will soon improve. The loans will be repayable by easy instalments, this novel scheme establishing a very important departure.

CHAPTER XV

TRADE: INDUSTRIES AND PRODUCTS:

FOR many years prior to the reign of Abdur Rahman trade with Afghanistan itself or in transit to regions beyond the frontiers had to contend against two difficulties, the one arising from the heavy imposts upon goods intended for local consumption, and the other from the excessive charges levied upon merchandise destined for markets beyond the Oxus. Under the Khans commerce struggled ineffectually against exactions which, if comprehensible during a period when the country was parcelled out among a number of reigning families, were directly inimical to its better interests as soon as the several territories became incorporated within one central administration.

Under the rule of the khans and in the reign of Shir Ali, trade received no encouragement; while, if Abdur Rahman were the father of his people, there is no doubt that, judged by his domestic policy, he revealed a lack of foresight in fulfilling his parental obligations. If overweening vanity and ignorance contributed to the failure of Abdur Rahman's attempt to make Afghanistan a self-supporting State,

it can be pleaded for him, nevertheless, that it was his intention to help trade and industries which were indigenous to the country. To effect this, he abolished inter-provincial tolls, maintained the scale of rates which was levied upon caravans in transit to Trans-Oxus markets, increased the frontier duties in proportion to the loss which he sustained by withdrawing charges hitherto imposed within his dominions, and began various industrial works in the capital.

Enamoured of his idea, he unfortunately omitted from consideration, besides a certain inadequacy of revenue, the overwhelming intolerance of his subjects to every form of labour. There was thus in Afghanistan itself, when six years after his accession to the throne the Amir embarked upon a campaign of commercial expansion, no reserve of capital behind the Government and no fund of energy in the people. In spite of the number of miscellaneous industries which he attempted in Kabul, no continuity of success was preserved, while reaction against his penalties upon Indian trade resulted in the opening up of the Quetta-Nushki-Nasratabad road as a commercial route. Direct loss of revenue, therefore, befell Abdur Rahman through his encouragement of a policy which was prejudicial to his own interests, as it was hostile to the trade of India and Russia. So far from profitable was the issue, indeed, that the position of the State at the close of his reign was in anything but a condition of comfortable prosperity.

Under pressure of financial difficulties arising from debts contracted by his father for the supply of military stores and equipment, the development of public works, and a host of minor obligations, Habib Ullah was compelled to reconsider his economic position. Accepting the situation on its merits, during the first year of his reign he remitted certain duties and lowered the transit charges on "through" caravans, in respect of indigo and tea, to the equivalent of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. *ad valorem* duty. This impost upon tea works out at the rate of 7 pies per pound, but the tax on tea intended for the markets of Afghanistan is much higher. This is returned at 125 rupees per camel-load of 360 pounds, thereby levying a charge of 5 annas against each pound, which, although an exceedingly high rate, compares not unfavourably with the crushing customs dues on the Russian frontier and the tax in England. A revival of the demand in Afghanistan for tea grown in India has shown itself during the past year or two; and, undoubtedly, if the import duty were lowered the Afghans would become better customers, especially for the green variety, which they most favour. If the Amir could be convinced that a smaller duty would involve no loss of revenue, owing to larger imports, a reduction of the tariff might possibly be sanctioned.

On the whole the fiscal policy of the present Amir encourages the belief that, in time, many of the existing obstacles to free commercial intercourse with India will be removed. The small benefits already

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offered to Indian merchants have produced immediate response and the prospect of further concessions is widely appreciated. Trade exports from Kabul during 1904-1905 alone increased by 25 lakhs of rupees, the volume of trade proceeding from Kandahar showing an improvement no less emphatic. The total value of exports and imports combined, since indications of a more liberal fiscal policy first were manifested, in lakhs of rupees, is shown in the following table:

	1900-01 Lakhs	1901-02 Lakhs	1902-03 Lakhs	1903-04 Lakhs	1904-05 Lakhs
Southern and Western Afghanistan	58.19	63.54	53.48	68.02	76.53
Northern and Eastern Afghanistan	48.01	61.00	63.99	70.56	95.36

The values of the principal imports from Kabul during 1904-1905 were fruits and nuts, 7.9 lakhs; animals (horses, sheep, and goats), 4.4 lakhs; hides (including skins) and ghee, each about 2.5 lakhs, the total being 26 lakhs as in the previous year. Exports during 1904-1905 improved by 25 lakhs to 69.3 lakhs. Cattle, sheep, and goats accounted for 8.8 lakhs of this increase. Cotton fabrics, valued at 38.3 lakhs (more than two-thirds being of foreign manufacture), increased by 12.5 lakhs. The other principal articles were cotton yarn (mostly foreign), 3.2 lakhs, and leather, 2.5 lakhs. The exports of tea (nearly all green tea) were 397,265 pounds Indian, value 1.5 lakhs, 300,384 pounds foreign, value 3.1 lakhs. Among imports from Kandahar during 1904-1905, valued at 40.2 lakhs, were raw wool, 18.8 lakhs; fruits

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and nuts, 12.2 lakhs; and ghee, 2.6 lakhs, in all of which there has been a larger trade. The exports during 1904-1905 reached 36.3 lakhs, the two principal articles—Indian cottons, 14.7 lakhs, and foreign piece-goods, 10 lakhs—both showing an improvement.

The general character of the trade conducted between Afghanistan and India is indicated by the appended list of the principal imports and exports with their values during the last three years in lakhs of rupees:

EXPORTS FROM AFGHANISTAN

	1902-03 Lakhs	1903-04 Lakhs	1904-05 Lakhs
Cattle.....	31.31	23.61	33.29
Other animals.....	36.66	24.41	38.38
Drugs and medicines, including charas	24.01	23.98	20.72
Fruits, vegetables, and nuts	37.69	28.59	31.01
Grain and pulse (largely rice)	1.37.73	1.36.64	1.49.78
Hides, skins, and horns	26.70	26.49	35.41
Provisions: ghee	82.78	53.09	64.05
Pickled tea	15.02	17.62	22.06
Seeds (chiefly linseed and rape- seed)	53.28	39.97	34.80
Silk.....	25.69	20.10	17.44
Spices.....	13.86	20.25	17.17
Wood and timber, chiefly teak	74.60	86.31	1.22.35
Wool, raw	32.92	23.91	27.05
Woollen goods	14.19	9.47	11.16

IMPORTS INTO AFGHANISTAN

	1902-03 Lakhs	1903-04 Lakhs	1904-05 Lakhs
Cotton, raw	12.76	12.49	7.60
Cotton yarn:			
Foreign	35.68	32.58	28.28
Indian	26.11	25.63	33.30

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	1902-3 Lakhs	1903-4 Lakhs	1904-5 Lakhs
Cotton good			
Foreign	1.78.57	1.55.28	1.50.31
Indian	64.37	52.60	63.34
Grain and pulse	10.35	18.65	17.39
Metals, mainly brass, copper, and iron	33.10	25.27	30.42
Oils	13.12	11.34	13.50
Provisions	21.47	20.49	19.43
Salt	43.14	31.42	31.46
Silk goods	11.24	9.54	8.22
Spices	16.69	16.76	14.04
Sugar	32.20	25.04	27.04
Tea	13.20	11.73	10.69
Tobacco	12.82	10.16	12.10

If India conducts with Afghanistan a trade which, although subject to fluctuations, enjoys considerable prosperity, the flow of commerce from the Trans-Oxus region towards the same markets is by no means contemptible. Indeed, articles imported into Afghanistan from Moscow, Merv, Bokhara, and Samarkand figure in every bazaar in the Herat and Afghan Turkestan Provinces. This trade passes through the customs stations of Kelif, Chushka Gusar, 40 miles to the east of Kelif, and Termes, 34 miles to the east of Chushka Gusar, the former of which is the principal seat of Russian Customs on the middle Oxus. Trade between Afghanistan and Russia has never been altogether prohibited by the Kabul authorities, Abdur Rahaman permitting kafilas to travel by the routes on which he had established customs posts. On goods purchased in Russian territory by Afghan traders a rebate equal to the tax levied by the Amir's officials is granted. Further,

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customs dues on goods imported from Afghanistan have been reduced by 50 per cent. Russian trade is therefore making rapid progress. The value of the goods which passed through the Russo-Afghan posts was £450,000 in 1902. To-day it probably exceeds half a million sterling. The import into Central Asia of goods from India has been strangled by the high customs tariff of the Russians, plus the heavy transit dues in Afghanistan itself. The agents of Russian firms at Kelif and Chushka Guzar state that they can now compete successfully with British Indian trade in Northern Afghanistan owing to the comparative cheapness of transport from Europe, which means that the Trans-Caspian and Orenburg-Tashkent lines of railway are carrying Russian merchandise at specially low rates. Nonetheless the Russian traders complain of the Afghan transit dues, as their imposition causes delay on all the principal caravan routes and adds enormously to the transport charges. With the advantages which Russia now possesses, unless a determined effort is made to save the situation for the benefit of Indian trade, we may presently expect her to renew her efforts to open up direct relations with Kabul in order to obtain greater facilities for commerce. It may be, too, that it will be in this manner rather than by active aggression that she will seek to lessen British influence in Afghanistan, and even to raise complications with the Amir.

The principal Russian commodities are:

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Broadcloth.	Glass-ware.
Fine linens and calicoes.	Cutlery.
Silk goods.	Loaf sugar
Velvet.	Pig iron.
Chintzes.	Steel ingots.
Sewing thread and silk.	Tin in plates.
Gold and silver lace.	Copper in plates.
Gold and silver thread.	Brass.
Needles.	Quicksilver.
Steel and copper wire.	Cochineal.
Russia leather.	Tea.
Paper.	Honey.
China-ware.	Wax, white and yellow.

In silk, linen, and cotton goods the Russian fabrics are quite equal to those articles of Anglo-Indian manufacture which find their way into the country. Russian chintzes are more durable and of coarser texture than the Anglo-Indian article; although less elegant in appearance and of colours that are not so fast, they meet with a ready sale among the poorer classes. The silk goods imported from Bokhara are of Russian manufacture, but they might well be superseded by better and cheaper importations from India. Silk handkerchiefs of various colours, and even black ones, are in great demand. Foreign silks do not sell so readily as certain lines in cotton and linen fabrics, since Kandahar, Herat, and Kabul possess their own silk looms, each loom paying an annual tax of 23 rupees to the State. The articles manufactured by the native looms are plain silks, called *kanaraz*; red, yellow, and purple *durahee* of slighter texture, less width, and of the same colours; *suga khanmee* of large and small widths, with perpendicu-

lar white lines on a red ground; *dushmals* or handkerchiefs, black and red, with white spots, bound by females around their heads; and *broonghees hummam*, for the bath. To meet the demands of the Kabul market, raw and spun silks are imported from Bokhara, Kandahar, and Herat, but the great bulk of either variety required by the Kabul looms comes from districts in the Kabul Province. Velvets and satins are imported from both sides of the frontier; but wherever Indian or British goods meet the products of the Russian market in Afghanistan, the bounty-fed trade of Russia in Central Asia enjoys a conspicuous advantage.

Certain imports from Russia and India suffer from competition with the Kabul-made product. In this respect the trade in gold and silver lace from Bokhara and India has fallen away very noticeably, although the quantity despatched from Bokhara still exceeds that imported from India. The trade in leather has also suffered by the development of local tanneries, but importations of the raw material are still necessary on account of the demands of the factory where the military equipment is made.

The trade in paper comes almost solely from the Russian market and quantities are imported from across the Oxus. The paper is of foolscap size, of stout, inferior quality, and white or blue in colour. There are two assortments: glazed and unglazed. The blue, glazed variety is preferred, the unglazed kind usually being sized at Kabul. A busy trade in this commodity passes between Kabul and Kan-

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dahar, the Russian product having captured the market to the practical exclusion of all other brands. The paper needs to be stout to allow facility of erasure; on this account, and with reference to the nature of the ink employed, glazed paper is most satisfactory.

The attention of the people is directed to the land rather than to trade and a very large proportion of the population takes naturally to cultivation. Farming is divided between the production of fruit and the growth of cereals. The Afghans are a fruit-loving people; in certain districts fruit, both in its fresh and preserved condition, forms the staple diet of a large section of the population throughout the year. A rapidly growing export in fresh and dried fruits exists with India. Indeed, so important has this industry become that, in the country round Kandahar, a marked increase in the number of orchards and fruit gardens has taken place within the last five years, the presence of the railway at New Chaman and its extension to Nushki making the exportation of fresh fruit not only practicable but profitable. Fruit farming is divided between orchard fruits, with which vegetable farming is usually combined, and those fruits which may be grown in fields on a large scale. In the one class are apples, pears, almonds, peaches, apricots, plums, cherries, grapes, figs, quinces, pomegranates, and mulberries, in addition to walnut, pistachio, the edible pine, and rhubarb, which grow wild in the northern and eastern highlands. Vegetable produce,



A TYPICAL WATCH-TOWER

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which holds a high position in the export trade, includes most domestic vegetables; while, of the uncultivated vegetable products, the castor-oil plant, the mustard, sesame, and assafœtida grow in great abundance. The fruit fields also produce several varieties of melons, including musk, water, and scented melons, cucumbers, and pumpkins.

In the direction of cereal production there are two harvests. One, reaped in summer, is the result of an autumn sowing and includes wheat, barley, and certain varieties of peas and beans. The second harvest is gathered in autumn from a spring sowing, and embraces crops, rice, Indian corn, millet, arzun, and jowari, besides other grains of less importance. In addition to these cereals, crops of madder, tobacco, cotton, opium, hemp, clover, and lucerne are very generally cultivated. Clover and lucerne are produced for fodder, hemp for its intoxicating properties, and madder, tobacco, cotton, and opium for export. In relation to the other crops, wheat is the food of the people, barley and jowari are given to horses, and arzun and Indian corn are grown for culinary purposes.

The mineral wealth of Afghanistan is at present almost entirely undeveloped, the late Amir, Abdur Rahman, being possessed by an instinctive animus against company promoters and concession hunters. Habib Ullah, too, has not yet made any sign of permitting the evident resources of the country to be exploited. The localities in which deposits are known to exist are shown in the accompanying table:

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MINERAL	LOCALITY
Gold	Laghman and adjoining districts.
Silver	Panjshir Valley.
Iron ore	Bajaur, Parnuli district, and Hindu Kush.
Copper ore	Various districts.
Lead.....	Upper Bangash, Shinwari country, Kakar country, and in neighbourhood of Herat.
Lead with antimony	At Argandab, in the Wardak Hills, Ghorband Valley, Afridi country.
Antimony	Shah-Maksud.
Silicate of zinc	Zhob Valley.
Sulphur	Herat, Hazara country, Pirkisri.
Sal-ammoniac	Pirkisri.
Gypsum.....	Plain of Kandahar.
Coal	Zurmat, near Ghazni, Afghan Turkestan.
Nitre	South-western Afghanistan.

Among the industries of Afghanistan, exclusive of the agricultural activities of a large section of the people, the production of silks, the manufacture of felts, postins, and rosaries, the cultivation of turmeric and ginger, and horse breeding occupy important positions.

Silk is produced in considerable quantity at Kandahar, which is also the centre of other arts and crafts that afford occupation and support to numerous families. The quality of Kandahar silk is capable of much improvement. The cocoons are small, of unequal size, and of different colours — yellow, white, and grey. The majority of the worms are reared in neighbouring villages, but principally in those along the Argand-ab, where also the mulberry trees are most abundant. The value of the mulberry trees around Kandahar is estimated at several lakhs. The whole of the silk produced in the district

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pays a tax to the Government, and its sale without permission is prohibited.

The manufacture of sheepskin coats is an important industry which once made Kandahar Province its centre. Of late years the trade has so greatly increased, owing to the demands for this article from India, that other districts have devoted themselves to it with equal success. The leather is prepared and made up in Kandahar, Ghazni, and Kabul on an extended scale, thus giving occupation to many hundreds of families. The method of manufacture is not without interest. The dried, unshorn sheepskin is immersed in running water until it is soft and pliant, while at the same time the wool is thoroughly washed with soap. After this the fleece is combed and the skin stretched on a board, when the inside surface is smeared with a thin paste, composed of equal parts of fine wheaten and rice flour, to which is added a small proportion of finely powdered salt. This dressing is renewed daily for five or six days, throughout which time the pelt is exposed to the sun. Before the conclusion of this process the skin is again cleansed, washed, and dried, after which all superfluous growths are removed. The surface is then treated with a tanning mixture made of dried pomegranate rinds, powdered alum, red ochre, and sweet oil. After some days, when the requisite suppleness has been gained, this preparation is scraped off.

In the western districts a mixture of alum and white clay is used in preference to the pomegranate rinds. In such cases the skins, when cured, are white and

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somewhat coarser to the touch than those prepared with pomegranate rinds. In the Kabul process the pomegranate rind is used most freely; as the Kabul skins are prepared with the greatest care, they are esteemed more than those of Ghazni and Kandahar. Before the tanning is completed the skins are handed over to tailors who reduce them to strips of 2 feet long by 4 or 5 inches wide, from which they make three varieties of coats. One class comprises small coats with short sleeves and requires only two or three skins; another description reaches to the knees and is furnished with full sleeves fitting close to the arm. This takes five or six pelts. A third pattern forms a large loose cloak of capacious dimensions extending from head to heel and furnished with long sleeves, very wide above the elbow and very narrow below it; it also projects several inches beyond the tips of the fingers. These require ten or twelve skins. Usually the edges and sleeves of the coats are embroidered with yellow silk. The completed articles cost from one to fifty rupees, according to size and finish. They are well adapted to the climate of the country; except in exposure to rain, when they are reversed, the woolly side is worn next to the body. The full-length coat is a very cumbrous dress and is usually only worn in the house; it serves alike for bed, bedding, or as a cloak. The nature of the material favours the harbouring of insects, and few people are met whose coats do not serve as a breeding-ground for an immense colony of vermin.

An industry of equal importance with the postin

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trade is the manufacture of felts, which similarly centres in Kandahar. From there these goods are distributed throughout the country, besides being exported to India, Persia, and the Trans-Oxus region.

Rosaries are also extensively manufactured at Kandahar from soft crystallised silicate of magnesia. This is quarried from a hill at Shah Maksud, about 30 miles north-west of the city, where soapstone and antimony are also obtained in considerable abundance. The stone varies in colour from a light yellow to a bluish white and is generally opaque. The most popular kind is straw-coloured and semi-transparent. A few specimens are of a mottled greenish colour, brown, or nearly black; they are used for the same purposes as the lighter varieties. Rosaries and charms of various sorts are made for exportation to Mecca. They range in price from a couple of annas to a hundred rupees. The refuse from the work is reduced to powder and utilised by native physicians as a remedy for heartburn.

It should be remembered that everything, whether solid or liquid, is sold by weight in Afghanistan. In cloth the conventional measure in the bazaar is from the top of the middle finger to the point of the elbow.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ARMY

PRIOR to the reign of Dost Mohammed the defensive power of Afghanistan was represented by an association of tribes whose chieftains offered to the Amir of Kabul, as circumstances dictated, a more or less willing service. Such a system, while making the promotion of any settled organisation impossible, was satisfactory only so long as the Amir of Kabul was able to rely upon the fidelity of the Khans. But in an order of government in which priority of place was secured by dint of might, each chief, as opportunity offered, rose to proclaim his independence of Kabul. By reason of these constant irruptions of disaffection among the tribes composing the confederacy, few rulers were in a better position than Dost Mohammed to realise the disabilities of such a military system.

The forces over which he exerted complete control were confined to the Kabul territory, although in addition he exercised nominal jurisdiction over the tribal levies of the khanates of Kandahar and Herat. These divisions of the available forces presented the following effective establishment:

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	KABUL	KANDAHAR	HERAT
	TERRITORY	TERRITORY	TERRITORY
Mounted	21,000	12,000	12,000
Dismounted	10,000	6,000	10,000
Total	31,000	18,000	22,000

At the moment, the fighting machine in Afghanistan was composed of those tribal chiefs, district landowners, and priests whose influence was sufficient to regulate the movement of any particular number of followers. At the first news of war the leaders of these several contingents hurried with their following to some central camp, the united strength constituting the army of the district ruler, although the component units of such a force owned allegiance to individual district chiefs rather than to any supreme authority. In addition to this combative force there was usually another body which, although not drawn from the best material and less numerous, was possessed of greater experience than the main following. Composed of men who were attached to no individual leader, or made up of the numbers of some border ruffian, these auxiliaries participated in the operations for the purposes of loot and from pure love of war and bloodshed. In each case their weapons were of the crudest variety; very frequently the dismounted forces were armed solely with swords, spears, and shields, the horsemen carrying matchlocks, flintlocks, or ancient pistols. Every one was compelled to furnish his own weapons, the mounted men being responsible for their horses. The militia held the lands on condition of service and were exempt from all taxes on land except the tithe. The men

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were born fighters and each, so soon as he could wield a spear or manage a fire-arm, attached himself to some district chief. No regular rate of pay was made by the leader to his following, who, if they failed to live upon their plunder, were indemnified by small grants of land, by the right of pasturage, and by permission to adopt a trade. Upon the part of the chief, too, as between himself and the Khan of the territory, the scale of remuneration was never fixed, the sum varying according to his local influence and the number of men he could bring into the field. This condition of affairs, typical of most Asiatic hordes at the time, had always prevailed in Afghanistan. The success against other native armies of such a system, wherein no precautions were observed and no knowledge of military operations was required, was due to the great *élan* in attack of the Afghans and to their undoubted courage, more than to any preconceived notion of the art of war.

In addition to the territories of Kandahar and Herat there was the State of Balkh, allied with but independent of Kabul and invested in Mohammed Afzul Khan. The army of Balkh was commanded by General Shir Mohammed Khan, an officer of the Anglo-Indian army of the name of Campbell, who had been captured by Dost Mohammed when he had defeated Shah Shujah at the battle of Kandahar. The influence of this man, who, professing the Mohammedan faith, rose to the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Balkh forces, was to

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become a determining factor in the evolution of the army of Afghanistan from its tribal state. Love of war was always more pronounced in the Afghan tribes than among other Eastern races; and, as the profession of arms to them was in the nature of a trade, expectations of a quick response of course prompted the suggestions which Lieutenant Campbell made to the Amir of Balkh. While every credit must be given to the wisdom and foresight of Mohammed Afzul Khan, there is no doubt that the beginnings of the present military system of Afghanistan were laid by this adventurous Englishman. Moreover, it was due to the influence which Campbell exercised over Abdur Rahman, the son of Mohammed Afzul Khan, which caused the former to become an ardent apostle of reform in military matters when he succeeded to the throne.

At the time of the elevation of Campbell to the supreme command of the army of Balkh, the forces in the territory were divided between a combined permanently enlisted body and a militia derived from Uzbeg, Durani, and Kabuli tribes. It numbered 29,500 men, comprising:

MOUNTED
7,000

DISMOUNTED
7,500

MILITIA
15,000

This force of fighting men, ill-organised and untutored, was deficient in central control, its condition not unnaturally reflecting the disorder actually inherent in the system. Under Campbell's administration the masses of tribal levies were reduced to an organised basis which contained the elements of

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the present establishment. The mounted and dismounted sections were formed into cavalry and infantry regiments; while the eighty guns, which were included in the Balkh army, were established by batteries and an elementary knowledge of the principles of drill and tactics was imparted to the troops.

In his task of reform Campbell received every encouragement. Although Dost Mohammed himself made no alteration in the Kabul district, he watched with interest the work of reorganisation. Unfortunately Campbell died before any great progress could be made, his demise being followed within a short space by that of Dost Mohammed in 1863 and Mohammed Afzul Khan in 1867. Nevertheless his influence was abiding, since the spectacle presented by the Balkh forces prompted Shir Ali to adopt an Anglo-Indian model as the working basis for his reorganisation of the Kabul army. In the sixteen years of his reign, between 1863-1879, he continued to introduce improvements founded upon Anglo-Indian drill-books, which he had had translated into Persian and Pushtu. Batteries of field and mountain artillery, and regiments of horse and foot were raised; territorial divisions were formed upon paper, and field columns, whose brigade and regimental units corresponded with the Anglo-Indian system, were created. In actual practice these troops were never brigaded together, and officers and men alike were ignorant of parade and musketry exercises. Nevertheless, if their notions of drill were vague, their spirits and their carriage were not unmartial.

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The nominal strength of each infantry regiment was 800 men, although daily parade seldom mustered more than 600 men. The state of the cavalry regiments was 300 men, the complete return of the regular forces of Afghanistan at this epoch being:

NUMBERS	AVERAGE	TOTAL	ARTILLERY
16 Regiments of Infantry.....	800	12,800	
3 Regiments of Cavalry.....	300	900	
Field guns			67
Mountain guns.....			9
Heavy guns			4
Mortar.....			1
Total		13,700	81

The system of recruiting for these regiments was the worst conceivable. Neither conscription nor free enlistment, it was little better than the forcible seizure of the able-bodied in each district, the men being compelled to serve on pain of the imprisonment and utter ruin of their families. The pay of the infantry was nominally five rupees a month, with ten rupees in each year deducted for clothing and accoutrements. The distribution of the remainder was very irregular and not unusually paid in grain, or credited to their families at home on account of local taxes. Consequently the soldier, often finding himself in his quarters without the means of purchasing the common necessities of life, was driven to recoup his finances by highway robbery, a delinquency which the officers punished — by sharing in the spoil.

These troops were accoutred with the discarded flint muskets, swords, belts, and bayonets of the British forces in India, or a Kabul imitation of these

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weapons. Certain companies were provided with two-grooved rifles, constructed from models carried off by deserters from some one or other of our frontier regiments. The uniforms were no less abominable, not infrequently representing purchases of condemned stores from frontier stations which had been disposed of at an auction. The clothing was invariably procured from these markets; and, as a consequence, native officers of all grades, even in the same regiment, might have been seen in every imaginable British habiliment, from a naval jacket to a whipper's-in hunting coat, including the full dress of a general and the round beaver hat of a civilian. British kit was very popular, and its possession conferred exceptional distinction upon the lucky owner.

Of the horse it is only possible to say that in all respects they were a bad imitation of the Indian light cavalry, reproducing even their Hussar saddles and steel scabbards. Their appointments, equally with the infantry, were almost hopeless and their drill quite unsuited to their order. Foot drill was the conventional exercise; and, since all horses were sent out to graze during the summer months, mounted drill was practised only during the cold weather, when through lack of food the animals were too poor in condition to be put through their facings. The horses were undersized and generally procured from the Turkoman steppes, but man and beast were equally valueless. No less unsatisfactory were the Afghan artillery, although, from the numerical strength of the Amir's ordnance, a very false idea

might be formed of the actual value of his artillery. Many of the guns were useless; for others there was no ammunition; while the equipment and carriages of the field guns were of the most obsolete pattern.

Besides these so-called troops, the Amir had always available the *jezailchis*, who were formerly the only infantry in the country. They were light troops, armed with matchlock and jezail, accustomed to hill warfare and perhaps as good skirmishers as were to be found at this time in Asia. Experience had taught them to be judges of ground and distance, while instinct made them chary of ambush. These were of two classes. The one class was in the service of the Amir, on a nominal salary of five rupees *per mensem*, which was paid in grain. These men were armed by the State and mustered some 3500 men, employed in holding forts and posts throughout the country. They were commanded by Sabbashis and Dahbashes, captains of hundreds and heads over tens, who received a proportionately higher rate of pay. The other class, the immediate following of the different chiefs, may be considered as a local militia. They were assigned rent-free a piece of land in lieu of pay; and, as a rule, these several bodies of militia numbered in each instance between 1000 and 1500 men.

The Irregular Afghan Horse, as they existed at this time, are even more difficult than the *jezailchis* to compute. They were not particularly numerous, although Kandahar and its dependencies could furnish 8000; Ghazni, 5000; Kabul, including Jela-

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labad, Logar, and the Koh-i-Daman, 15,000; while Balkh, with its Uzbeg population, returned 10,000. These men were the equal of any undisciplined horsemen in Asia; mounted upon small but wiry horses, carrying a perfect arsenal of weapons, among which shield, spear, matchlock, sword, pistol, and knife were prominent, they were always rough and invariably ready for the field. Capable of undergoing great fatigue and exceedingly harassing to a flying foe, they were, when led by a determined chief, anything but contemptible in a *mêlée*.

The establishment of the regular and auxiliary forces, as they existed at this date, boasted no commissariat department. In districts where the revenue was paid in grain a certain proportion was allotted to each fort; if the troops were on the march, orders upon the headmen of the various villages were issued, the villages being credited with the amount of grain, etc., supplied when the revenue came to be collected. Upon any occasion where the whole available force was collected *en masse* each district had to furnish a certain amount of grain as well as its fighting contingent, the daily ration of every man being estimated at one seer of flour. So long as this supply lasted the men considered themselves bound to remain with their chiefs; but the moment that the issue ceased there was a general dissolution of the forces. Similarly, there was no settled transport system nor ordnance supply, arrangements, hap-hazard in the extreme, rising as occasion required. In many respects the changing conditions of military

life, in the absence of specific reforms, brought no remedy of abuses which, existing under Dost Mohammed, found opportunity for increased activity in the new order of affairs. The inevitable breakdown occurred and at the first tests, imposed by the actions at Peiwar Kotal and Ali Masjid, the entire machine went to pieces. Later, at Charasiab and Ahmad Khel, the Afghan array had returned to its own style of fighting and, under tribal leaders, ill-disciplined, yet courageous and determined, fought valiantly and well.

In spite of the excellent beginnings which had been made by Shir Ali, the condition of the army at the time of his accession placed a very heavy burden upon the shoulders of Abdur Rahman. Handicapped by internal dissensions, it was not until he had established as paramount his authority over the tribes that he was able to turn attention to the crude structure which had been built by his predecessor. Elaborating the handiwork of Shir Ali by many personal touches, he gradually shaped the whole system to his own mould. To every regiment of cavalry and infantry he attached complementary engineer, medical, and commissariat details, so that each unit was complete in itself and independent of his brigade. In a measure, and as the outcome of this initiative, Abdur Rahman became the actual founder of the army of Afghanistan. Recognising the many deficiencies in the military system, he increased its potential significance by substituting for the old feudal levies one central army, paid, created, and controlled

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directly by himself. With implacable severity he chastised his enemies, breaking up their powers of resistance and developing his own position until the foundations of his earlier work became the permanent supports to a military autocracy. Regiment after regiment was added to the permanent strength of his military establishment as opportunity offered; while, in addition, 50,000 pack-mules and pack-ponies were set aside as a park of transport, and immense reserves of grain were stored in readiness at Herat, Kandahar, and Kabul. Monthly pay-sheets were drawn up, by which generals of the first class received 600 Kabuli rupees monthly, a brigadier 250, a colonel of cavalry 200, a major 120, captains of cavalry 80, of infantry and artillery 30, down to corporals of foot, who received 10 rupees. The rank and file were paid partly in kind, a trooper getting 16 rupees in cash and four rupees' worth of grain, a private of foot 5 rupees in cash and three rupees' worth of grain. Every regiment was to have a chaplain (*mullah*), a physician (*hakim*), and a surgeon (*yarrah*). To some extent bribery and corruption were suppressed. A corps of signallers was formed and a body of sappers and miners instructed in the art of entrenchment, bridge-building, and road-making. Further, the gunners were taught the technique of their *matériel*, while the Kabul regiments were put through courses of musketry and the elemental mysteries of tactics and strategy were disclosed to their officers.

So much was attempted by Abdur Rahman that

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he well may be forgiven for leaving to his successor execution of detail. Within a few months of his accession the strength of the army in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and beyond the Hindu Kush consisted of 58,740 men with 182 guns.

REGULARS

CAVALRY	INFANTRY	ARTILLERY	GUNS
9750	30,890	1600	182

IRREGULARS

TRIBAL FOOT	TRIBAL HORSE	TOTAL
9000	7500	58,740

Weak in artillery — there being few trained gunners — the cannon, partly of English, partly of native manufacture and of various ages and patterns, were the time-honoured relics of Dost Mohammed and Shir Ali. The infantry rifles of the regulars also were of different makes, varying from the old two-grooved Brunswick to the Martini-Henry. The tribal forces were largely armed with matchlocks. Assisted by the subsidies which he received from the Government of India, Abdur Rahman swept away the rubbish and collected an immense stock of modern ordnance supplies. Over and above the quantity held against the immediate mobilisation of the standing forces, by importation and manufacture he piled up a vast reserve of rifles, field-pieces, and guns of large calibre with their requisite ammunition, doubtless very varied in their character and including every sort of pattern from Krupp field-pieces to Maxim, Nordenfeldt, and Hotchkiss quick-firers.

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For this purpose he erected in Kabul itself the necessary works, imparting to the position of Afghanistan by these means and for the first time in its history some element of security, and creating an army which required only to be supervised with the same watchfulness by his successor to attain ultimately as near to perfection as any purely native organisation can arrive. Ordnance factories — with a weekly output of 2 guns, 175 rifles, and a varying quantity of small arms ammunition — workshops, and an arsenal existing to-day in Kabul prove the inflexible determination of his plans. In furtherance of them it was his idea to fashion an army which, apportioned between regulars and tribal levies, would number 1,000,000 men. There was to be a permanent regular force of 300,000 men, with an established ammunition reserve of 500 rounds to each field-piece and 5000 rounds to every rifle. Moreover, many months before his death the ordnance supplies, amassed in Kabul, sufficed for a very large proportion of such a force, at the same time exceeding the amount necessary for the requirements of the existing field and garrison forces. Had Abdur Rahman only survived a few years longer, it is indisputable that a force of a million fighting men, more or less trained but at least efficiently armed, would have been secured, although it may be doubted whether, save under the press of dire necessity, he would have ventured to issue weapons to them or to place more than a quarter of this number actually in the field.

At his demise the numbers of the forces available

were considerably below the million standard. At that time the peace strength of the regular army was estimated at 150,000 men, distributed between the military centres of Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jelalabad, Asmai, the region of the Upper Oxus, and in detachments on frontier duty along the Russo-Afghan, Perso-Afghan, and Indo-Afghan boundaries.

The many flaws in the system which Abdur Rahman had created were emphasised at his death, in part by the indifference of Habib Ullah to matters military, but in the main by organic difficulties emanating from reactionary influences in the environment of the throne. Broadly speaking, the army and administration of Afghanistan were too centralised to be continuous unless the reins of government had passed into the hands of a man as fearless and able as Abdur Rahman was. Habib Ullah is a man of different mould; and as a consequence on the death of Abdur Rahman the absolutism of his rule suffered material contraction.

It is to be regretted that the late Amir, while evolving out of a heterogeneous collection of warring tribes a settled and independent country, failed to bequeath to his son any portion of his own singular abilities. As a consequence the order of government in Kabul is neither so unquestioned nor substantial as it was, for the men whose services assisted Abdur Rahman to effect his life's work have dropped out — from death or through inability to serve Habib Ullah. Faults, inherent in the char-

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acter of the Afghans and particularly prominent in the present Amir, have thus measured the success which befell Abdur Rahman by the span of that ruler's life, until it is really but little more than the shell of the former edifice which now remains.

Deprived of the inspiring genius of Abdur Rahman, within the five years which have elapsed since his death there is every ground to believe that the army has fallen away in efficiency as well as in numbers, and that the work of reorganisation largely requires to be repeated. In a measure the Afghans retain at the present time their old characteristics — their love of their own country and their hatred of alien races; but, through lapse of time and their intercourse on the one hand with the Russians and in the other direction with India, they are liable to flock to the standard of the Amir less than they were. It must not be forgotten that to-day Afghanistan reproduces the condition of a settled country, possessing a population much more peaceful than were the inhabitants a generation ago. Moreover, through the penetrating associations of prosperity and through many years of peace the warlike instincts of the tribes have become numbed, while their martial ardour has evaporated, requiring constant amelioration of the conditions of service by way of stimulating their military zeal. Increases of pay and more generous rations have been conceded in the past and, lately, attempts have been made to soothe the susceptibilities of the officers. Habib Ullah has ordained that for the future promotions will go by

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seniority, although the system of selection, where it is concerned with posts which are hereditary in families connected with the Royal House, will not be altered. As a sop to the feelings of the rank and file the class-company system is to be enforced, the men of the different tribes being incorporated regimentally under their own tribal leaders. In this direction, too, it is of interest to note that every cantonment will be provided with a garrison mullah who, on Fridays, will read prayers before the assembled troops and address them on Saints' Days, while teachers in religious instruction are to be attached to each regimental company.

Lately, Habib Ullah has shown signs of awakening to the responsibilities of his position; and it is to be hoped that, under pressure from recent political circumstances, he may abandon the foolish indulgence to which hitherto he has been a slave. Indications of this spirit are not very pronounced, but their manifestation does not come a moment too soon. In the main they are associated with military matters, although certain measures deal exclusively with the administration. Among the former, orders have been given to the leather factories in Kabul to manufacture 300,000 sets of infantry equipment and an agent has been despatched to India to purchase gear for the mounted branches of the service. At best these activities are no promise of an abiding interest in his service, and, indeed, they are discounted by his refusal to hearken to advice. At the present time the army of Afghanistan, in its existing condition,

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admittedly possesses in a high degree the qualities of endurance, courage, and mobility; but, in spite of its modern guise, it lacks discipline and cohesion and, as a fighting machine, is liable upon these grounds to be thrown quickly out of gear. Under these circumstances the observation may perhaps be hazarded that it would be as well, before equipping it with first-class material, to make sure that the men were sufficiently organised to understand its use. At present modern weapons are unknown to the great bulk of the forces of Afghanistan; and it cannot be denied that the absence of this quality makes it more of a menace to itself than to an enemy. Hitherto there has been greater variety than method in the Afghan military equipment, irregularity of pattern distinguishing alike rifle, field-piece, and ammunition, while the education of the officers and the training of the men has been neglected.

The continuation of these imperfections is due primarily to the inability of the Amir of Afghanistan to rely upon the loyalty of his troops. At the same time their existence appertains to every Oriental army which is placed solely in native custody. They have always been a feature of the Afghan service. The condition of the garrison in the capital perhaps reveals some little superiority over those which are placed farther afield, but it can be affirmed quite truly that the military qualities of Afghanistan proceed entirely from the inborn fanaticism of its people and not from the practical organisation of its active state. Nevertheless under conditions

applicable to mountain warfare the Afghan army could become an invaluable auxiliary; although its capacity, as well as its determination, to offer any prolonged resistance are matters of doubt. Defects could be removed by reorganisation; good qualities enhanced by careful training under British officers or by the despatch of selected Afghan officers and men for training with our own troops.

In spite of the obduracy of Habib Ullah over this point, he has made known his intention of falling back upon the support of the Indian Government when his own arms have been defeated. This contingency, which is liable to arise at the outset of a war with any foreign power, imposes upon the Government of India a thankless burden, in no way lessened by the proposal of the Amir to create in Kabul an Afghan Staff College, and the determination of the Imperial Government to avoid insistence upon what is, by no means, an unreasonable precaution. As matters rest at present, unless change is introduced, the preposterous conceit which distinguishes the Afghans is destined to receive an unwelcome shock. Nevertheless the Amir cannot be persuaded to place his military affairs in the hands of the Indian Government; since, now that the Japanese have beaten the Russians and, in the mind of the Amir, the Imperial Government is frightened at the Russian Government, the Afghans argue, having defeated British arms, that they are now superior to the Japanese. Therefore they deny us the possession of any point of advantage in their country, a

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consummation which, while not quite that towards which our diplomacy has been directed, may be ascribed to the results, in combination, of a policy of friendly missions and half measures. Now that we have given Habib Ullah permission to import without check unlimited supplies of arms and ammunition the disadvantages of such a situation increase rather than diminish; as it exists so close to the Indian frontier and in a way in which it cannot be controlled by the Indian Government, it behooves the Imperial Government to come to a definite decision at once with regard to its line of action in relation to Afghanistan.

Abdur Rahman did not confine his work of reorganisation solely to the military system of Afghanistan. He devoted great attention to the military roads of the State, realising that a system of communications was as important as a well-equipped and efficiently organised army. Kabul, as the capital, was united with Badakshan on the east, with Turkestan on the north, and with Kandahar and Herat on the south and west. Prior to these works certain native roads did exist between the several centres; but it was due to the activity and initiative of the late Amir that improvements were introduced, or altogether new lines of communication opened. Undeterred by the difficulties which beset his engineers and as an index to the consistent vigour with which he assisted the development and execution of his policy, he threw roads across the Hindu Kush, facilitating by these means not only the trend of inter-provincial trade,

but the pacification and administration of his Provinces. In addition to these strategic roads, he improved the trade routes which led into the country from the Trans-Oxus, India, and Persia. In the south the Khyber, Kurram, and the Gomul routes received notice; in the north there were the routes from Russian Turkestan leading through well-known centres to points of admission upon the Afghan border. After the subjugation of Kafiristan he took the precaution of making a military road through that country from north to south, thus opening up communication with the Kunar Valley, and Jelalabad, where considerable numbers of troops are always stationed. Further, he directed that it should eventually be carried over the western Hindu Kush so as to give a better route to Kataghan, Badakshan, and the upper Oxus Valley. This portion of the work was finished in March, 1904. The northern terminus of the road is at Faizabad, the principal town of Badakshan, where caravan routes meet from Bokhara on the north-west, the Pamirs and Kashgar on the north-east. The Afghan Government has constructed *serais* at all the halting-places, and caravans are encouraged to use the road in preference to that through Chitral.

Curiously enough, in another direction, the construction of fortresses, Abdur Rahman was more neglectful. If he improved the lines of communication and reorganised the state of the army, he built but few forts, relying almost entirely upon those which already had been constructed. Nowadays,

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with the exception of the Kabul positions, Dehdadi, Mazar-i-Sharif and Baldak Spin, the two latter of which he built to command the approaches to Balkh and Kandahar, there are no modern forts in the kingdom. Those that do exist are made of mud and are of insufficient strength to withstand bombardment. The great majority serve merely as garrison depots and are without interest save as interesting ruins.

Note: The following information concerning the trade in fire-arms in Afghanistan is furnished by the American Consul-General, William H. Michael, of Calcutta:

It appears that on the Persian border of Afghanistan a single-loading rifle, of the type lately imported in such large numbers, is priced at from \$6 to \$6.75; a Martini rifle, \$5 to \$6.75; a ten-chamber revolver, \$8; and a magazine rifle, \$16.75. By the time these weapons reach Kabul their value has greatly increased, viz., a single-loader, \$80; a Martini-Henry, \$80; a ten-chamber revolver, \$33; and a magazine rifle, \$165. In the Pathan valleys the price is again increased, and at present as much as \$264 is being given for a magazine rifle with a packet of ammunition thrown in, and a revolver with a few rounds of ammunition fetches \$100. The types of rifle made in the Kohat Pass and elsewhere are priced at about \$30. There are several factories, one in the village of Shiadatalab, another at Sahibuddin, and others in the Khunki Valley. Government rifles are copied as exactly as possible. Many Punjabi mechanics are employed, but there are a number of Pathans at work, too, and their workshops are not wanting in tools or machinery.

CHAPTER XVII

KABUL: ITS PALACES AND COURT LIFE

THE road from Kandahar to Kabul in its present condition is one of those permanent improvements with which the late Abdur Rahman endowed Afghanistan. Under the ægis of that energetic ruler the old caravan routes between Kandahar and Kabul, and Kabul and Herat, were replaced by first-class military communications, the elders of the villages in the several districts traversed being held responsible for their security. The road to Kabul runs north-east from Kandahar and the distance is 315 miles. The two points of importance are Kelat-i-Ghilzai, on the right bank of the Tarnak River and 85 miles north-east of Kandahar, and Ghazni, 225 miles north-east of Kandahar and 78 miles south-west of Kabul.

There is no town at Kelat-i-Ghilzai; but there are two small walled villages not far from the fort to the north-west and a few nomadic encampments upon the surrounding plain. The fort stands upon an isolated plateau which in places is very steep. There are two gateways, respectively situated upon the northern and southern faces of the work. The quarters of the garrison are arranged along the eastern

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and western faces and a battery of four guns is posted upon a neighbouring height. The garrison is not large and the defences have suffered from neglect. There is good water from springs within the perimeter of the fort; but the position is endangered by the existence of certain features in the immediate vicinity which command the walls, and also by the facilities for cover offered by the character of the approaches. The bazaar is small, containing fifty shops; in addition there are several Government granaries and a residence for the Governor.

Ghazni, the capital of the Ghilzai country and the principal centre between Kandahar and Kabul, occupies a very important point, since it commands the road through the Gomul Pass to Dera Ismail Khan. From its strategical position, too, it must be considered the pivot to any line of operations against an enemy advancing from the west or north; while its possession in the hands of an Indian army would place such a force astride one of the most important channels of communication in the State. It is situated upon the left bank of the Ghazni River, on level ground between the river and the termination of a spur, running east and west from the Gilkoh Range 7730 feet above sea-level. The place spreads itself out to the south and east, but the river checks its expansion on the west, the stream leaving but a confined space between its left bank and the knoll where the citadel stands. It is surrounded by a high wall, built upon the top of a mound, in part natural and in part artificial. The wall is of composite

construction, stone and brick masonry laid in mud having been employed in its erection. It is flanked at irregular intervals by towers and possesses a total circumference, inclusive of the citadel, of 1750 yards.

The citadel is situated at the north angle of the town, upon an abrupt, detached knoll where the hills terminate. It lies 150 feet above the plain and dominates the city completely. Its defences are a high masonry wall, loopholed and provided with a parapet, but no rampart save the natural hill. There are four towers at the angles, but these are small and insignificant. The citadel has no other strength than that afforded by its commanding situation and formidable slopes; the area of the summit of the knoll is limited and the buildings are not adapted to shell-fire. The town and citadel are both commanded by hills to the north, but the former is in a measure sheltered by the position of the latter. The supply of water is unreliable and there is only one well within the walls. The view from the citadel is extensive, but by no means inviting, as the plain is very indifferently furnished with villages. There are very numerous shrines — 197 being the number given — which are surrounded by orchards, vineyards, and small corn-fields. Excepting along the course of the river the plain is bare and empty, although it is broken up by the irrigation channels which cross the road at intervals of 8 and 10 miles. Distant hills extend in low ranges of bare rock. The country skirting them is a waste of stone and scrub, in the possession of wandering Ghilzais whose flocks of

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goats, sheep, and camels share the pastures with wild deer, wolves, foxes, and hares. The black-hair tents of these nomads of the desert, pitched in the sheltered hollows of its surface for protection from the keen westerly wind, impart to the scene its sole sign of human habitation.

The town itself is dirty. The thoroughfares, lined with houses several storeys in height, are narrow, dark, and irregular. Near the base of the citadel, upon its easterly and westerly aspect, there is a small open space varying from 100 yards to 150 yards; upon the southern side the houses crowd close up to the rock. From the Khanah gate to the Kandahar or Bazaar gate a street runs with some pretensions to uniformity of breadth and directness of course. Another leads north-east to the open space upon the west of the citadel, while from the Kabul gate there is communication by several narrow and somewhat tortuous lanes. The houses are built of mud; only in rare instances do they possess domed roofs.

The population fluctuates according to the season and the amount of trade passing into India. It seldom rises above 8000 people nor falls much below 3000 people. The inhabitants are largely drawn from the Nasir, Suliman Khel, and other Ghilzai clans, who are concerned with the through caravan trade *viâ* the Gomul, together with a certain proportion of Duranis and Tajiks. There are, also, 250 families of Hazara labourers and perhaps 200 Hindoo shopkeepers, bankers, and traders. The community in Ghazni is very mixed, ignorant, superstitious, and,

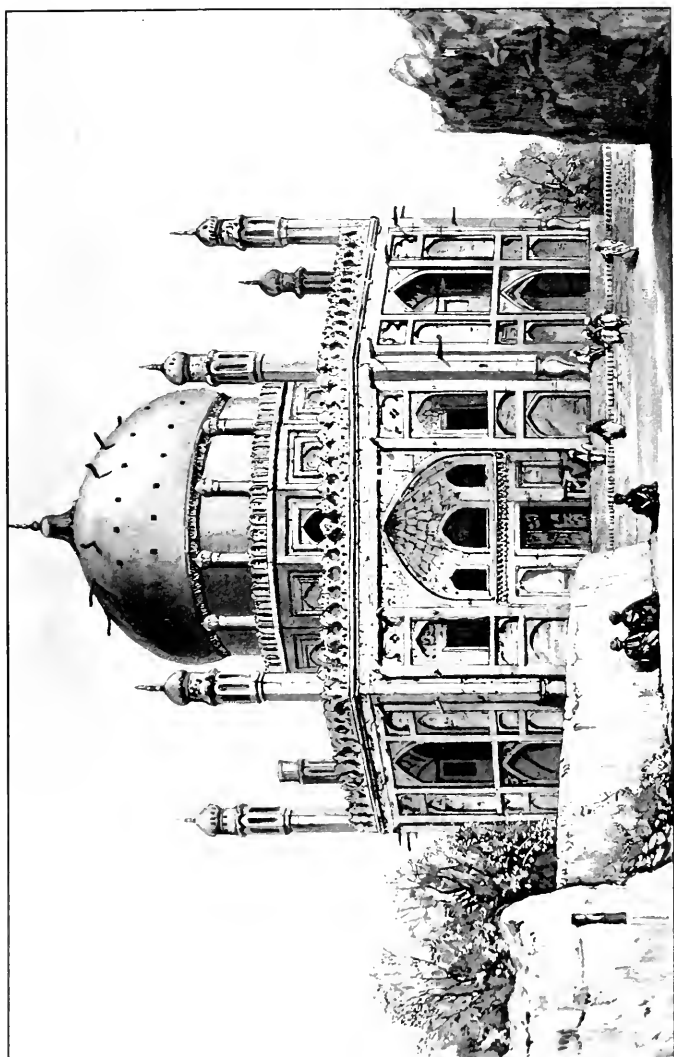
if the Hindoo element is excepted, without wealth. Hindoos in Ghazni are required to wear tight trousers instead of loose ones, a black cap in place of a turban, and to pay a capitation tax. Upon compliance with these restrictions they receive protection and contrive to control the trade between India and Afghanistan. The chief trade of the place is in corn, fruits, and madder, all of which are largely produced in the district. Wool and camel's-hair cloth are brought into the market from the adjoining Hazara country; and, since the British occupation of Wano and the opening up of the Gomul Pass, local commerce has developed. Agriculturally the district is a rich one. Large crops of wheat and barley are obtained, the capital itself drawing no small proportion of its grain supply from this market. In addition to the land under cereal cultivation there are magnificent pastures, while the fruit is no less celebrated. The excellence of the apples surpasses that of those grown at Kandahar, although the Kandahar melons, an especial production of that city, are superior to the variety which are reared at Ghazni; For corn and apricots Kabul makes a heavy demand upon Ghazni; but the madder grown in the vicinity is almost all exported to India, while tobacco, corn, and the castor-oil plant are grown only for home consumption.

The climate of Ghazni for several months of the year is very cold, the snow lying upon the ground from November until the middle of March. Frosts fall early in October and the ice lasts until mid-day;

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from November for many weeks there is no thaw at all. In December the country is covered with 3 feet of snow which remains on the ground until March. The spring is genial and, as the fields become green, flowers appear on the plain. Rain falls irregularly and only for a few days, but the bane of the climate is the dust which comes up with the westerly winds. In summer the heat is less than that which prevails at Kabul and Kandahar. The severity of the winter months entails as a rule heavy mortality among the people, the lack of fuel being the principal cause of the deaths. The flocks of sheep and goats and the droves of camels also suffer; and, as there is a large nomadic population in the district, the distress is not confined to the limits of the town. Indeed, the Ghazni centre experiences a higher rate of mortality than anywhere else in Afghanistan.

Kabul is situated at the western extremity of a spacious plain in an angle formed by the approach of two converging heights, the Asmai and the Shere Darwaza, with which the Takht-i-Shah is joined by a narrow ridge 7 miles above the confluence of the Logar and Kabul Rivers. The elevation of these three hills are: Asmai, 6790 feet; Shere Darwaza, 7166 feet; and the Takht-i-Shah, 7530 feet. The city is about 3 miles in circumference, but there are no walls round it at the present time. Formerly it was encircled by walls constructed of sun-baked bricks and mud. Traces of the wall may be seen in many places; along the crests of the Asmai and Shere



TOMB OF AHMED SHAH, CANDAHAR, ADJOINING THE CITADEL

Darwaza it is still standing and follows those heights to the Kabul River, which separates the two. If the existing landmarks are any indication of its original size, it is improbable that old Kabul ever can have boasted a permanent population of 20,000 inhabitants. The walls of the old city were pierced by seven gates, the Lahore gate being now the only one which is left. These earlier gates were the Sirdar, Pêt, Deh Afghanan, Deh Mazang, Guzar Gah, Jabr, and the Lahore, the existing entrance. Of these the Sirdar was the last, and the Jabr gate the first, to be removed. The sites of the others, although no longer existing, are quite well known and serve as custom stations to the revenue officers. Many of the names by which these seven gates were known belonged to 1504, when Baber raised the fortunes of the city to the dignity of a capital — a period so remote from to-day that it is only by the recapitulation of the names that the incidents of that epoch are recalled. Nowadays the Lahore gate has fallen into decay and its heavy wooden doors, studded with iron, appear as if about to fall. The brickwork of the gateway has also crumbled and the loopholes in the arch are choked with rubbish. In spite of its dilapidated condition it remains an emphatic link between the present time and those past centuries.

The city extends a mile and a half from east to west and a mile from north to south. Hemmed in by the mountains, there is little room for a capital of any size, except in a northerly direction towards

the Shirpur cantonment. It is the intention of the present ruler of Afghanistan to lay down the lines of a new city, which, in size and in the importance of its defences, shall be worthy of the growing dignity of the State. The late Amir, Abdur Rahman, had planned the site of another capital in the fertile Chahardeh Valley to the west of Shere Darwaza and Asmai, and between them and the Paghman Hills, when death interrupted his labours. Nevertheless he bequeathed his policy to his successor, Habib Ullah, who has not yet moved in the matter. Shir Ali, disgusted with the unpleasant condition of his city, began a new one at Shirpur — the city of Shir Ali — but circumstances prevented him from completing more than three walls, these relics of a self-imposed task subsequently affording much assistance to the British when the Shirpur cantonment was built. In its present state Kabul affords a curious and interesting study in contrasts between the old and the new conditions. It is still a dirty city, its mean appearance emphasised by the neglected condition of its rambling lanes and the ramshackle character of its houses. Yet it boasts the possession of several buildings more or less imposing, their existence striking a very welcome note of relief after any close acquaintance with the narrow, ill-paved streets and their unusually sordid environment. Still, accumulations of dirt and the neglect of ages cannot conceal in the general complexion of the capital a certain tawdry magnificence, constantly illustrated by the erection of elaborate edifices that pass into

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neglect within a short space of their construction. In this way there are quite a number of so-called palaces in Kabul, as well as various buildings which, erected under the spur of that conspicuous vanity that distinguishes the Afghan Court, and vaguely intended for industrial enterprises, have been abandoned entirely or put to other uses.

In spite of the vagaries of design that distinguish the architectural arts as they are revealed in Kabul, interest clings to the old Bala Hissar which, lying on a spur at the foot of the Shere Darwaza, was the abode of Shir Ali, similarly serving as the Residency for Cavagnari when that ill-fated officer lived there. The Bala Hissar is now in ruins, but it still contains the Black Well, a hole of infamous repute, serving as a prison for political offenders and other malefactors. The defences of the Bala Hissar have been demolished, although the original gateway is still standing and the outer wall and moat exist. The fort itself is now used as a magazine and within the walls rough barracks have been provided for the troops. The recent increase in the garrison of the city is expected to occasion its total demolition and the re-erection of more convenient quarters.

The modern palaces of Kabul are, of course, superior in size and in their schemes of adornment to the earlier buildings; on this account it is impossible that they can fail to arrest attention. The residence which will become eventually the principal seat of the Amir in Kabul is the Dil Khusha Palace. This is still in process of construction. Much time has

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been spent over the work, Mr. Finlayson, the architect retained by the Amir, being delayed with his task by native jealousies and Court intrigues. It will be a large, semi-European structure with two storeys, the upper windows permitting pleasant views of the palace gardens. Its cost, which will amount to several lakhs of rupees, is to be borne by the resources of the State which are already quite sufficiently straitened. As a rule the Amir selects his abode according to the prevailing season, changing as the whim seizes him, the apparent caprice being more generally dictated by the fear of assassination. The favourite palace, the Erg, which was appointed as the quarters of the Dane Mission, lies a little beyond the town, between it and the Shirpur cantonment where Elphinstone had his headquarters. Here there is now located a hospital for sick and wounded soldiers; and, provided by a paternal and God-granted Government, a retreat for lunatics, maimed prisoners, and the blind and indigent, where the delights of a lingering death may be indulged, since the authorities thoughtfully refuse either aid or medicine. The palace of the Erg corresponds more nearly with the part played in the old days by the Bala Hissar. It is at once the central domicile of the Court and a strong defensive work, although it is commanded by a fort situated on the summit of Asmai. The accommodation is divided between the palace quarter, occupying the inmost station, and an inner and outer fort. A high wall, pierced on its eastern aspect by a square gateway (in which there

are no gates), encloses the entire position. Within the gateway and extending round the wall of the outer fort are the quarters of the troops, and in the centre there are spacious gardens. One regiment is always on duty in the outer fort, a second regiment being detailed to safeguard the defences of the palace proper and its outer precincts. At no time during the day or night is the Amir without a strong guard. Cossack posts are established about the entrance, while patrols and sentries watch the grounds and the palace itself. The inner fort is separated from the outer one by a wide, deep ditch, and on the remote side there rise high battlements. Access to it is gained by a drawbridge which, lowered between sunrise and sunset, is raised at night.

In appearance this work is decidedly Oriental. The much decorated gateway is set in a semicircular recess, flanked by imposing bastions. The gates are of wood, massive and studded with iron, the arches on either side containing quarters for the guards. To enter it is necessary to cross the guard-room and to negotiate beyond it the various sentries. In a small tower above the gateway a Maxim is stationed, the tower itself being used at sunrise and sunset as a place of ceremonial salutation. Morning and night throughout the year, when the Amir is in residence, the changing of the guards is accompanied with an outburst of native music, a weird discord of drum and horn, which breaks forth in greeting to his Highness. This inner work is itself divided by a further wall, which is pierced with loopholes and unceasingly

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patrolled. To a certain extent it acts as a defensive curtain to the heart of the palace, for, in the space between, there are a series of small gardens and the palace premises. The garden walks are fenced with iron railings; abutting from them at their eastern and southern extremities are rows of symmetrically arranged buildings of single and double storeys. A postern gate affords admission, its position covered by a massive, wooden screen of considerable height, length, and strength. This erection protects the palace when the postern gate is open. The several buildings that are congregated behind the curtain-wall comprise the Amir's pavilion, the official quarters of the princes, and a separate enclosure in which stands the Harem Serai. In addition there are the Amir's treasury and storehouses, together with the quarters of certain Court officials and the barracks of the body-guard — the little colony being set within a landscape of singular beauty. Numerous varieties of plants grow in the garden; about the pavilion there is a wealth of flowering stocks, sweet-smelling peas and gaily coloured roses, the air being heavy with the scent of many perfumes. Considering the mean and uncomfortable squalor of the city, the presence of this oasis, with its fresh flowers, green grass, shady trees, and neatly tended paths, lends to the position of the palace an attractive brightness. Away from the flowers there is a somewhat garish note: the walks between the beds are paved with marble, and the stone figures of two recumbent lions repose upon either side of steps leading to the pavilion. This

building was constructed by Abdur Rahman, its plan being modelled upon a church which he had seen in Tashkent. It is a pretentious two-storey structure, square in position, dome-shaped in design, with towers and cupolas upon each corner, the lofty, octagonal hall reaching to the roof. Upon the ground floor four alcoves lead off from the main space, and above them there are four other rooms.

The corner towers possess an upper and a lower chamber. A covered walk runs round three sides, shading the windows of the alcoves from the glare of the sun at noon. The upper rooms are lighted by windows overlooking the gardens; the alcoves on the ground floor by windows which open upon the verandah. The outer face of the walk is pierced by nine arches, and the roof serves as a promenade for any one who may be occupying the chambers in the towers. Each alcove is about 12 feet square, while the breadth of the hall is 18 feet. The recesses are retained by the Amir for his personal use, one acting as an entrance lobby, another as the receptacle for his couch, a third as a writing-room and a fourth as a waiting-place for his pages. There are no doors to these recesses on the main floor, and between each, lying back against the wall, there are various articles of furniture, a black wood writing-desk, a German piano, a marble-topped table, and a carved-wood cabinet. Two pictures adorn the wall—one representing the House of Commons and the other the House of Lords; it might be a suitable attention upon the part of the Government of India to

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supplement these pictures with paintings of Queen Victoria, Edward VII, and Queen Alexandra.

For audiences of a semi-private character, as well as for all Durbar matters of a public nature, Abdur Rahman frequented the Durbar Hall, situated beyond the moat in the gardens of the Erg Palace. It is a long, lofty building with pillared verandah, corrugated iron roof, and twelve spacious windows on each side, curtained after the European fashion. Two rows of white columns, placed at regular stages down the floor of the building, support an elaborately carved ceiling, ornamented with stencilled plates beaten out of empty kerosene tins. It is 60 yards in length and 20 yards in breadth. The decoration is Oriental, but in the upholstery there is a mingling of the influence of the West with certain fashions of the East. The eastern entrance admits through a big double doorway and portico to the Durbar chamber, which is usually the scene of any festivities that the Amir may provide for the delectation of his Court or the entertainment of his guests. At such a moment the floor is carpeted with English carpets and the aisles of the hall are occupied by long tables, each place being set with a cane-bottomed wooden arm-chair, European cutlery, and Indian napery. The illumination proceeds from two electric arc lamps, their dynamo worked by a portable engine which is brought from the workshops for the occasion. The building lies east and west across the garden and, at its western extremity, there is the Amir's Guest House. This comprises, on the ground

floor, a large hall, which opens into the palace gardens, and three smaller rooms. A stone staircase, with wooden balustrade, leads where there is a second apartment, on an upper floor, lighted by many double windows and giving upon a terrace.

In addition to a summer palace at Indikki, regarded by the late Amir as a convenient place of banishment for his sons when occasion for their punishment occurred, there is the Shah Ara Palace. This was used for the reception of the Dane Mission, and is generally employed in all state ceremonies. It is situated in a spacious garden, where stands during Ramazan a Durbar tent, in which the Amir fulfils his religious duties. For audiences with the Amir at this palace the invited guests assemble in a similar tent, whence they are conducted to the throne room. The floor of this apartment is decorated with Persian carpets; and a row of chairs, arranged along one wall, is confronted by two carved cupboards. In the centre of the room is a polished table and near the entrance there is a smaller one, circular and marble-topped. The Durbars held in this palace are of interest because they constitute one of the few occasions upon which the Amir of Afghanistan receives and speaks with Europeans.

The Amir is smaller in stature than his father, to whom he bears a marked facial resemblance; his attitude is no less dignified, although his manner is much milder than that which distinguished the late Abdur Rahman. In speaking, Habib Ullah suffers from a slight impediment of speech, the result of an

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attempt against his life when, as a child, some one endeavoured to poison him. In appearance he is of a light complexion, with heavy features which are adorned with a slight beard and moustache. He is broad, rather clumsily built, with a marked tendency to stoutness. Neither in his face, nor in such evidences of capacity as he has shown, does he reveal the truculent ability of his immediate predecessor upon the throne.

Frankness and self-reliance were, perhaps, the most prominent characteristics of Abdur Rahman's nature. At the same time he was a genial, strong, clever man of the world, well-informed upon all subjects of general interest, eloquent, resolute, logical, and possessed of much innate humour and facility in repartee. Always alive to his own interests, he possessed no small capacity for intrigue; and his first bid for position in Afghanistan was as the nominee of the Russians, General Kauffman, the Russian Governor-General of Turkestan, having arranged that he should be supplied with 200 breech-loading rifles, 20,000 rounds of ammunition, accoutrements for 100 horses and 100 footmen, and 5000 Bokhara tillas (35,000 rupees). Yet when he appeared across the border and arrived at a secret understanding with the Government of India about his nomination as Amir, he posed as the champion of his faith and the liberator of the land from foreign domination, suppressing, in order to do this, all mention of his agreement with England and of his relations with Russia. Nevertheless, as soon as his own posi-

tion was secure, he curtailed the influence of the mullahs.

In spite of his amiability Habib Ullah does not possess a very secure seat upon his throne, the intrigues of the queen-mother and the jealousy of his brothers disturbing his position. Nor does he receive the confidence of his people or reveal sufficient strength of character to dominate the situation. Afghanistan needs the firm hand of a man, who is as much a maker as a ruler of men. Habib Ullah is weak-willed; and, in a country where the authority of the priest is a law in the land, his subserviency to priestly control and his subjection to the influence of his brother, Nasr Ullah Khan, have attracted universal attention. Nasr Ullah and the Queen Dowager, Bibi Halima, wife of the late Amir and the mother of Sirdar Mohammed Omar Jar Khan, are the stormy petrels in the Afghan sea of domestic politics. Habib Ullah in some measure understands the situation; and, doubtless, it is out of respect for their dignity that Bibi Halimi and Omar Khan are closely protected by a strong detachment of the Imperial Body-guard — so closely, indeed, that they are practically state prisoners.

It is more difficult for the Amir to assail the position occupied by Nasr Ullah, who was appointed commander-in-chief of the Afghan army in the early days of Habib Ullah's accession. Little attempt therefore is made by the Amir to curb the masterful will of his brother. Nasr Ullah Khan, who has become a Hafis or repeater of the Koran, also held the

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office of Shahgassi, or Gentleman Usher to the King. Just before the advent of the Dane Mission at Kabul he was created an Itwad-ul-Dowlah or Pillar of the State. In his dual capacity he threw into the scales already settling against the Mission the whole weight of his influence, ultimately securing its complete discomfiture. He is not, perhaps, the most reliable prop to the policy and rule of his brother, since he aspires to the throne for himself; and there is no doubt that when opportunity offers he will make a bid for it. At the moment neither his plans nor his partisans are prepared, but events move with such swiftness in Afghanistan that no one can gauge more than approximately the varying fortunes of the situation. Serious family quarrels have compelled the Amir to exercise his authority in the arbitrary way common in Afghanistan. The first step taken was in 1904, when the Omar Jar was deprived of his body-guard, the men being sent back to their regiments. The next step was to remove him from his office as head of all Government officials, an appointment in which he had succeeded Nasr Ullah Khan in 1902. These proceedings caused much excitement in the capital, and public feeling increased when it became known the Bibi Halima had refused to accept the allowance assigned to her for the upkeep of her household. Matters became further complicated by an incident which roused the Amir's anger against the "Queen's" faction. Omar Jar ordered the Master of the Horse to send him the favourite charger of the late Amir. This request was disre-

garded, and the unfortunate officer, on being summoned to give an explanation, was so maltreated by the Sirdar's retainers that he died from his injuries. When news of these proceedings reached the ears of the Amir, the Bibi Halima and her son were directed to leave the palace where they had resided since the demise of Abdur Rahman, Habib Ullah finally decreeing that they should be confined to another residence where they are practically state prisoners. His Highness is said to have asked two of the principal mullahs in Kabul to adjudicate upon the causes of the strained relations existing in his family; but, although a temporary compromise was established, no permanent reconciliation was obtained. It is necessary to study carefully the table of the Amir's descent to understand the precise position of affairs existing to-day in Afghanistan.

Even in Afghanistan women wield an influence over the affairs of the State, and its domestic policy is never without the disturbing effect of a jealous woman's interference. Indeed, the sway of the harem in Court circles at Kabul is as pronounced as the power of the priests — a condition of affairs that is no small departure from the old order, when women and priests were relegated to the background. Since the ascent of the present Amir to the throne there have been changes in the army, in the State, and in the harem. Three wives have been divorced — a woman of the Mohmund tribe; a woman from the Helmund country who had only been a few days in Kabul, and the daughter of Saad-ud-Din Khan,

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Hakim of Herat, the will of the Kabul priests prevailing upon Habib Ullah to enforce the spirit of the Koran, which forbids the maintenance of more than four wives. The number of concubines is unrestricted and the strength of the royal harem in this respect increases constantly, slaves of prepossessing appearance—in the service of the queens—being chosen. Their end is usually disastrous, and the hapless woman who, as a slave, excites the admiration of the Amir is generally — “removed.” The four wives who have survived this example of priestly authority are: (1) the mother of Aman Ullah; (2) Ulia Jancah (the daughter of Yusef Khan Barakzai, the favourite wife until recently — she is the mother of a daughter); (3) the daughter of Ibrahim Khan; and (4) the mother of Inayat Ullah. The child of Yusef Khan, Ulia Jancah, is known in the intimate circle of the harem as the Hindustani queen. She is a woman of education, charm, and accomplishment. She reads and writes; as a former pupil of an Indian seminary she also sings and plays the piano. She is no admirer of the Afghan ruler, his people, or the State; and it was the chance expression of this aversion which brought about her displacement.

The woman now filling the position of chief queen is the mother of Aman Ullah. She has recently given birth to a daughter. At a more normal season she strikes an interesting contrast with the daughter of Yusef Khan. She is a woman of ungovernable passions, wilful, domineering, and capricious — an odd

mixture of the termagant and the shrew. She has killed with her own hands three of her slaves who had become *enceinte* through their intercourse with the Amir, and she chastises personally her erring handmaidens, purposely disfiguring any whose physical attractiveness may appeal to their master. Her influence over the Amir, however, is limited. She sings and dances, but she lacks the subtle craft of the Bibi Halima and the gentle dignity of the Hindustani queen. The four wives of the Amir occupy positions which are graduated to a recognised scale. The first wife, the mother of Aman Ullah, draws an allowance of one lakh of rupees annually; the second wife, Ulia Jancah, the Hindustani queen, 80,000 rupees; the third wife, the daughter of Ibrahim, 20,000 rupees; and the fourth wife, mother of Inayat Ullah, 14,000 rupees a year. The first queen resides in the harem serai of the Shah Ara palace where the two principal concubines, the mothers of Hayat-Ullah Khan¹ and Kabir Jan² and respectively former Badakshi and Tokhi slave-girls, are housed. The inmates of the harem are busy people, occupying themselves in knitting, embroidery, and other feminine pursuits. The chief wife has a sewing-machine and with it makes clothes for her children. The Hindustani queen, who is of royal birth, lives in great style. She is an ambitious woman and wears English dresses, although it should be said that they are costumes in the fashion of thirty years ago. Each of the Amir's married wives, as distinct from

¹ Born 1890.

² Born 1893.

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the concubines, has a separate house, where she lives with her children.

The Queen Dowager, Bibi Halima, the mother of Sirdar Mohammed Omar Khan, a woman of engaging personality, at one time held a position not without close resemblance to those filled by the Empress Dowager of China and the Lady Om, queen to the Emperor of Korea. Her intrigues on behalf of her son were over-bold and she is now confined — her son, contrary to the energetic character of his mother, taking little interest in his situation. The Bibi Halima is a woman of considerable beauty, particularly intelligent, and well informed. She is nearly forty-three years of age, and her sympathies are so distinctly British that her palace is regarded with as much suspicion as the British agency. The law of succession to the thrones in Mohammedan countries, apart from the exercise of opportunity which secures recognition upon the basis that might is right, entails the throne upon the son of the first woman whom the ruler may have married. The heir may be younger than sons born to other women, but, if such a marriage were the first alliance contracted by his father, the succession is seldom set aside. Abdur Rahman, however, departed from this custom as the Amirs of Afghanistan have power to appoint their successors.

Habib Ullah is the offspring of a Wakhan concubine named Gulriz with whom the Amir Abdur Rahman consorted. Bibi Halima, also the wife of Abdur Rahman, lays claim to it through her direct descent from the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan. She is of

the Blood Royal indubitably; and, if she were in possession of her liberty, she would soon compel her son, Sirdar Mohammed Omar Khan, to take the field. His chances of success in any rebellion would be as great as those enjoyed by his half-brother, Nasr Ullah Khan, similarly a son of Gulriz and full brother to Habib Ullah. The disparity in the ages of these three sons of Abdur Rahman bears upon the present situation — Habib Ullah, born 1872, and Nasr Ullah, born 1874, being many years the senior of Mohammed Omar, who was born at Mazar-i-Sharif on September 15, 1889. By a strange irony, which may yet be not without its effect upon the succession to the throne, Inayat Ullah, the son of Habib Ullah and the lawful heir to the throne, was born in 1888, his uncle, the son of Bibi Halima and Abdur Rahman, being only six months younger.

Ultimately there is some prospect of a struggle for the throne taking place between the uncle and his nephew. Each is a young man; but, although time may not temper their discretion, it does lie within the power of Habib Ullah to place the rights of his son beyond the reach of this particular rival candidate. In any case, and it is of interest to note it, Habib Ullah has gone out of his way to consolidate the position of his eldest son, Inayat Ullah. This he did by despatching him on the recent mission to India and appointing him Governor of Kabul, while Mohammed Omar shares the restricted liberty of his mother, and Hayat Ullah, born in 1890, the son of a Badakshi slave-girl and half-brother to Inayat Ullah,

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the heir-apparent, has been appointed to Badakshan as Governor of the province. These facts are in reality only eddies showing the way that the current runs in Kabul, where from its complex nature the position may be described as shifting, delicate, and treacherous as any quicksand. Nonetheless the policy of the new Amir has been markedly benevolent; and his remission of certain taxes, his many acts of clemency to Afridi fugitives, and his invitations to Afghan refugees of noble or tribal families to return, reveal a great change in the controlling forces in Afghanistan. It is to us not a matter of gratification altogether, for it merely shows that the tribal leaders of noble families have lost their influence, that they can no more sway factions or parties in the population, and that power in Afghanistan is being gradually centralised around the Amir in a circle of officials which is controlled by the mullahs. The invitation to the refugees to come back is not out of any generosity of feeling; it arises from pride — and a desire to appear to be indulgent to those who are helpless and who are now impotent. In fact it is political charity, intended to spread the good name of the new ruler of Afghanistan in India, and to impress the British Government. It is a certain indication too, that, in the event of complications in the future with Afghanistan, the assistance of dissatisfied Sirdars will be of little value, for, in a few years if not very soon, the only elements will be the officials, the bureaucracy, and the mullahs. At the same time the power of the Amir himself has been reduced and

transferred to the officials. The measures of Abdur Rahman prepared the way for this change. He either killed or frightened out of Afghanistan every rival or every individual likely to acquire influence. His declaration and boast was that his God-granted Government ruled for the benefit of the people and the glory of religion, that he had no object but the good of the country and no secrets from the people as he had no interests but theirs to serve. There is not amongst any class of Afghans the feeling of reverence for the throne which exists in Turkey or Persia. The Amir is the highest official of a tribe that has seized power; and Afghanistan is gradually evolving a bureaucratic Government controlled by priestly influence, whose policy will not always be measured by the interests of the country, but by whatever interpretations of the "Sheriat" some powerful mullah may conjure up.

Meanwhile Afghanistan is acknowledged to be an independent Government within certain limitations. No Power has any right to interfere in its administration, although it is obvious that certain contingencies might alter its position in this respect. In the meantime the Government of Afghanistan owes no national debt nor any war indemnity. The Amir is not hampered by any capitulations with foreign Governments; he has no foreign ambassadors in his capital — although this is more a grievance than a pleasure to him, since he is anxious to vaunt his independence before the Courts of Europe.

The relations between Great Britain and Afghani-

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stan as they stand to-day are fixed by treaties. The British Government acknowledges the independence of Afghanistan; it accepts responsibility for its safety and integrity against unprovoked aggressions, so long as the Amir does not act against the advice of the British Government in matters affecting his relations with other countries. Great Britain pays the Amir eighteen lakhs of rupees as an annual subsidy by virtue of Sir Mortimer Durand's treaty with the Amir Abdur Rahman, dated 1893, and confirmed by Sir Louis Dane with the Amir Habib Ullah, 1904-1905; in addition to which she permits Afghanistan to import without restriction supplies of war materials and to maintain a political agent at the Court of the Viceroy of India.

In return for this understanding with the Imperial Government, the Amir is bound by his word and treaties to be the friend and ally of Great Britain; he pledges himself not to communicate with any foreign Power without consulting with the Indian Government, and to accept at Kabul a British agent, who must always be a Mohammedan subject and provided solely with a native staff.

The British agent at Kabul holds an absolutely thankless position. He is shunned of necessity by Europeans in order to avoid giving rise to political suspicions, and he may see the Amir only in the public Durbars or by special appointment. To all intents and purposes he is a prisoner; since, although received in Durbar, he does not visit any one and seldom ventures into the street. If a European were

seen speaking to the British agent, or to any one attached to his staff, he would certainly be packed off at once to the frontier. No Afghan is allowed to enter the British agency and no Englishman has visited the British agent, since Sir Salter Pyne left Kabul. Even to be found near the building causes suspicion, as several Afghans have discovered. Moreover, since in many cases punishment has not ended merely with imprisonment, it has become an unwritten law to avoid the British agent and his *entourage* at any cost.

The British political agents at Kabul are appointed by the Indian Foreign Office, who forward to the Amir for his approval the names of a few Mohammedan officials. One of these candidates is selected, the term of office being from three to five years. Upon returning to India he is usually rewarded with the title of Nawab. The agency staff consists of two secretaries, one hospital assistant, and about two or three dozen private servants and body-guard, all of which must be natives of India. The British agent attends the public audiences of the Amir; but, if he has any letters or communications from the British Government to convey to the Amir, he must ask for an appointment to deliver them.

If there are any legal disputes or claims between members of the staff of the British agent, both plaintiff and defendant are referred by him to the Courts of Justice in India. If the British agent or any member of his staff has a dispute with the Afghan subjects of the Amir, such cases are usually decided

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in the Courts of Kabul, under the law of that country. Complications of a very serious political character are invariably referred to the Governments of India and Afghanistan for arrangement between themselves.

The British agent puts his diary and also the private letters of the whole of his staff into one package, which he hands to the Amir's Postmaster-General at Kabul, taking a receipt for their delivery under seal; from the Amir's post-office they are sent down to Peshwar, where the Amir's postmaster is given a discharge for their surrender to the political agent at Peshawar. In the same manner the packages of letters, which are delivered by the British political agent at Peshawar to the Amir's postmaster at that place, are forwarded to the British agent at Kabul by the Amir's Postmaster-General, who also takes a voucher for their safe and proper condition. The services and duties of the Amir's political agent with the Viceroy of India, who, together with his staff, is a Mohanmedan subject of the Amir, are nearly the same as those of the British agent at Kabul, except that the term and time of his office is not limited and depends entirely on the pleasure of the Amir. Besides the political agent the Amir has various commercial agents in India as well as in England, the most important of these having been Sir Acquin Martin, Mr. T. B. Guthrie, and Mr. E. T. Pack. Each of these industrious and excellent servants of the Amir has suffered the loss of large sums of money through a very pronounced defect in the

Amirs of Afghanistan, which causes them to forget their obligations so long as there is a frontier lying between the Government of Kabul and those with whom its debts have been contracted. Representations remain unanswered and, apparently, no authority exists which can make the Amir of Afghanistan redeem his liabilities, although an obvious course awaits if the Government of India would assent to the attachment of the subsidy.

CHAPTER XVIII

KABUL AND ITS BAZAARS

THE bazaars of Kabul are quite unworthy of the capital, but radical improvement in their character could only be made by a complete reconstruction of the city. Here and there new ones have been built, Habib Ullah himself having erected several at his own expense, but the principle of construction, adopted at the time of the building of the city, is the great stumbling-block to any extensive alterations. The narrowness of the streets, many of which are mere alleys, gives rise to perpetual congestion; while, in consequence of their contracted character, they are always dirty and overloaded with the refuse of the houses, more particularly in winter when they are blocked with the snow, which is swept from the roofs. Of the several bazaars of the city, the three principal, running irregularly parallel to each other, are the Shor Bazaar, the Erg Bazaar, and the Darwaza Lahori Bazaar. The former extends east and west from the Bala Hissar to the Ziarat Baba Khudi, a distance of little more than three-quarters of a mile. The latter, stretching from the Darwaza Lahori, passes through the centre of the wood market and terminates at the New Bridge.

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The Erg Bazaar crosses the town and communicates with the workshops. The western portion of the Darwaza Lahori Bazaar was the site of the Char Chata, at one time undoubtedly the most magnificent bazaar in Afghanistan. The structure, ascribed to Ali Mardan Khan, whose name is immortal in these countries, was handsomely laid out and highly embellished with paintings. Four covered arcades, of equal length and dimensions, were separated from each other by open squares, originally provided with wells and fountains. The entire fabric was destroyed in October, 1842, by General Pollock, as retribution for the murder of Sir William Macnaghten and the indignities offered to his remains.

The Nakush Bazaar, or cattle market, is situated north of the Kabul River and west of the Pul-i-Kishti in the Indarabi quarter. The Mandi Kalan and the Mandi Shahzada, the chief grain bazaars, lie in the Tandur Sazi quarter, between the Shor Bazaar and the Darwaza Lahori. The Shikarpuri quarter, adjoining the Pul-i-Kishti on the right bank of the river, is the fruit market. Here are collected the various fruits for which the capital of Afghanistan is so famous, the exhibition of grapes, apples, apricots, and pears becoming at once the glory of the bazaars. Melons are missing from this bazaar, as this important branch of the fruit trade of Afghanistan is conducted in the Mandi Kalan. Near to the fruit bazaar are the wood and charcoal markets, each section of trade possessing its particular locality and its special market-place.

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In this way there is a shoe bazaar, a meat market, a vegetable market, a copper bazaar, silk bazaar, and certain central marts where arms, tobacco, furs, medicines, and cloth are sold. In the boot bazaar there are a number of Anglo-Indian importations and no less a quantity from Russia. The native shoes are made from leather which is manufactured in Kabul at the Amir's factory — articles of local manufacture being put up as a rule upon the premises where they are sold. The more important merchants possess accommodation beneath their shops, where craftsmen, whose special industry is allied with the business in the premises above them, are employed. These underground rooms are so small that the men at work are compelled to crouch over their knees, while customers, who bring articles for repair, sit in the street. In the copper bazaar, where domestic utensils are to be found, there is the ceaseless tapping of countless hammers, as the men, assisted by boys who ply the bellows or feed the furnace with charcoal, wield their tools upon long-necked vases, hubble-bubbles, kettles, cooking pots, water-bottles with delicate handles and graceful spouts, stoves, plates, and copper boxes of all shapes and sizes. These workers in metals, whether they are the ironmongers or silversmiths, smelters of copper, or the moulders of brass, are worthy of their hire, and bring to their labours an extraordinary patience and exactitude. The silversmiths are, perhaps, the most wonderful craftsmen, although the men who trace fantastic designs upon metal vessels with blunt instruments

are not to be despised. From early morning, without cessation until the heat of the mid-day hours makes work impossible, they bend over their tasks, actively working their pliers, tweezers, and hammers as they fashion ear-rings, bracelets, or graven ewers. The business, transacted at these stalls, seems out of proportion with the labour involved, as sales are arranged between the merchant and his customers only after many days of protracted dealing.

The method of barter is always the same in the East. Customers sit down by the side of the merchant, examining and asking the value of his goods, praising certain pieces, and decrying others, until conversation has worked round to the article which it is desired to buy. Ten times the price will be asked at first, perhaps haggled over with all sincerity, until, as the would-be purchaser rises to leave, a few rupees will be knocked off the figure which the vendor has been demanding. It is then prudent to leave, returning some other day to begin over again. The hours spent in an Oriental bazaar are of such supreme interest that they are sacrificed very willingly and are not easily forgotten. The setting of the scene is romantic, while the life of the city passes in endless, kaleidoscopic changes of character, of costume, and of men and beasts. It is never wise to hurry transactions conducted amid such environment. Time is of no value to the merchant, who regards the overtures with indifference. He may hope that ultimately his customer will become his patron, but he would never show his satisfaction nor lose an oppor-

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tunity to drive a haggling bargain. Around the shops there are always groups of idle but profoundly interested spectators. Some one ascertains the price the worker is paid; another inquires of the merchant the amount he will receive for it; and, in the hope of extracting a commission from the proprietor of the shop or his purchaser, all are eager to advise the customer upon the merits of the article he may have chosen or the sum he may have offered.

In the silk and cotton bazaar there is equally the press and bustle of an active trade, a continuous passing of gaily decked customers and busy traders—from India with caravans of silk, from Turkestan with bales of printed cottons, plain calicoes, and other articles of Russian manufacture, merchants and itinerant traders from the most distant parts of Afghanistan, from Persia, and from Kashgar. There is, too, a wonderful blaze of colour in the silk stalls, while the display of goods in the cotton shops reveals a various assortment of English clothing—cotton and merino vests, men's shirts, drawers, and socks—and a variety of coloured waistbands, a weird collection of ties, and some really startling handkerchiefs from India. These stalls, whether their effects are imported from India or from Turkestan, are mostly in the keeping of Hindoos, who transact a very profitable business with their Afghan masters. Nevertheless, long intercourse with Afghanistan has quite crushed the Hindoo, obliterating all trace of his original individuality, and emphasising his inborn humility and lack of spirit. In Kabul the Hindoos pay

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a poll-tax and wear turbans, which may be only red or yellow — a similar rule prevailing in Kandahar. Formerly they affected the red, the blue lungi, which is prohibited to them, being favoured by the Afghans. Similar indications of prosperity may be found in the skin bazaar, where the furriers are engaged in making the fur coats for which Kabul has become famous. Here there are several kinds of expensive furs such as marten, a variety of red fox, squirrel, wild cat, and astrakhan. Over the latter fur the Amir exercises a monopoly. The cheaper kinds are put to numerous purposes, figuring as lining for cloaks, hats, and high boots of the Russian and Turkoman pattern. Many of the fur caps are costly in production and elaborate in design. Cut from a piece of velvet, trimmed with fur and heavily embroidered with gold thread from Benares, they are sold in the Kabul bazaars only to the richest classes, becoming, as a rule, a finishing touch to a costume which, on the score of colour effect, will leave little to be desired.

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